

CHRIST AND COLBASE

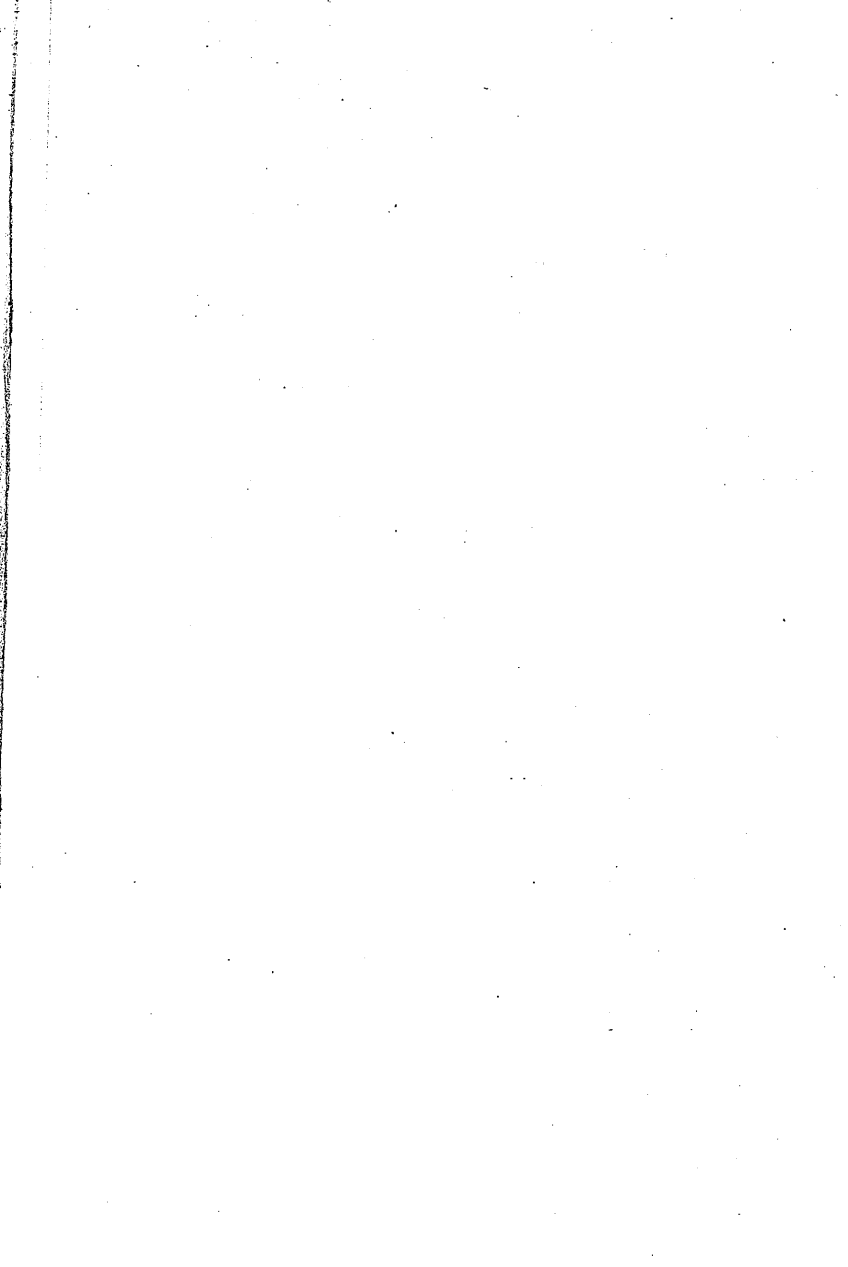


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CHRIST AND COLOSSE
OR
THE GOSPEL OF THE FULLNESS

THE
Christ and Colosse
OR
The Gospel of The Fullness

Five Lectures on S. Paul's Epistle to the Colossians

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CHRIST AND COLOSSE

FOREWORD

To many of those who are most familiar with the letter of the New Testament Epistles the real message, it is to be feared, is almost as much a mystery as to those who, like Cleon, are contemptuously unable to conceive that

“ a mere barbarian Jew,
As Paulus proves to be, one circumcised ”

could “ have access to a secret shut from us.” So the Apostle speaks, alas, to many still in vain. “ He writeth, doth he ? Well, and he may write.”

This is in many cases because readers, accustomed to the use of Scripture mainly as a storehouse of texts, and baffled, rather than helped, by the division of a book into chapters and verses, “ do not see the wood for the trees.” Even the best of commentaries may hinder by directing attention to the

verse rather than to the whole epistle, the part rather than the whole.

The sole purpose of these five lectures, given in substance at the Summer Schools at Portland, Or., and Victoria, B.C., is to supply such a general introduction to the Epistle to the Colossians and such a rapid summary of its contents as will enable readers to obtain a real grasp of the significance of one of the greatest of Christian documents. It is in the hope that the lectures may thus become more widely useful that I have ventured to put them out in the present form.

CHAPTER I

THE INSTRUMENT

COL. i. 1: "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God."

CHAPTER I

FOR the understanding of any piece of great literature two preliminaries are requisite. One is that the document should be properly related to the developing mind of the writer ; the other is that the writer himself should be properly related to his particular place in the development of the ages. These preliminaries are as necessary for the appreciation of a book of Holy Scripture as for that of any other work, unless (which God forbid !) we are to think of the books of Holy Scripture as totally unrelated to the human minds which were made the channels of revelation and to the ages of the world in which they first appeared.

One of the most pregnant of all metaphors used in the Gospels for 'the Kingdom of Heaven' is that of the *Seed*, and the force of the metaphor lies in the fact that, whereas the seed, considered in itself, is something self-contained and separate, from the moment it is placed in the soil it begins

to be affected by conditions of soil and atmosphere which qualify its growth. So the Divine Word, committed to Time, must have its secular unfolding, "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." This is true of Christian history regarded as a whole ; it is also true of the experience of the individual Christian. Any Christian may find it true, with Browning—

" that one Face,
Far from vanish, rather grows,
Or decomposes but to recompose,
Become my universe that feels and knows."

Yet, strange to say, this development which we concede to the whole body, and to the normal individual, has been tacitly, and sometimes explicitly, denied to the apostolic writers who contributed so large a part of the New Testament Scriptures. At least it is difficult on any other hypothesis to understand the continued retention of a non-chronological sequence in the case of the Epistles of S. Paul. Is not this to suggest to the general reader that the Pauline experience was from first to last static? We are ready to concede that the Apostles advanced in knowledge during the days of the ministry ; we accept the promise that the Holy Spirit was to come

to lead them into all truth ; yet, once the Holy Spirit is given, we imagine their spiritual and intellectual equipment complete at a stroke. Surely the counterpart of this would be to expect in Confirmation a Pentecostal gift from which the "daily increase . . . more and more" has been excluded.

Let us not be afraid of the doctrine of a developing Christianity such as includes the Apostolic age among the rest. It will save us many a futile effort to discover fruit out of season. Indeed, the 'Forty Years' between Pentecost and the Fall of Jerusalem is as pre-eminently the period of preparation for the independent life of the Church as is the Forty Years in the Wilderness the needed time of preparation for the entrance of Israel upon an independent national existence. I like to think of these years as the pre-natal period of Church history, *i.e.*, the period in which its life is still bound up with the life of the mother Church of Judaism. During this generation we have a threefold development in the direction of a full catholicity. There is, first of all, the *geographical* development by missionary expansion which completes the apostolic witness to the scattered Hebrew communities. This witness came to Judaism by A.D. 70 when the

destruction of the changeable leads to the revelation of that four-square city which is the eternal Holy of Holies. Secondly, there is the *institutional* development which reveals the organism of the Body in its ministerial and sacramental order. Thirdly, there is also to be perceived, if we care to observe, a *doctrinal* evolution which is to issue in a more completely stated Christology than was possible at the first.

Let me not be misunderstood. All Christian witness of Apostolic days was, from first to last, Christo-centric. Every one of the Apostles would have been eager to affirm :

“ The acknowledgment of God in Christ,
Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee
All questions in the earth and out of it.”

But to grow in grace was also to grow in understanding. As, serving God with all their hearts, they increased in love ; and, as serving God with all their wills, they ripened in character ; so, serving God with all their minds, they increased in intellectual appreciation of the things they taught.

Hence the New Testament Epistles are documents representing, in authorship and time, many varying stages of intellectual experience. In most cases

it is not possible to mark the growth which we may nevertheless assume. The Epistle of S. James represents an early stage in which the historic ministry is still of recent memory. Here Christ, though Lord and Master, is less a cosmic figure than the moralist, the teacher, and the prophet. The Johannine writings, on the other hand, represent a stage of experience in which the historic has long ago faded into insignificance as compared with a spiritual fellowship with Him Who is nothing less than the Logos, the Eternal Word of God. The history is in no wise forgotten, yet is but the illustration in Time of absolute and eternal facts related to Christian experience as no "life after the flesh" could ever be.

In each of the above cases we have, unfortunately, no sufficient amount of material spread over the years from which to trace the mental evolution of the writer. Happily, however, in the case of the Epistles of S. Paul, which extend over a period of at least two decades, we have supplied just what is otherwise lacking.

The whole of S. Paul's career, whether considered from the point of view of the missionary or of the writer, is the story of steady and continuous advance

towards ripeness of experience and fulness of expression. The great Apostle to the Gentiles, equally with Michel Angelo, might have affirmed to the close of his life, "I still learn." We think of him in the attitude of learning at the University of Tarsus and at the feet of Gamaliel in Jerusalem. He was still learning as he listened with lacerated heart to the speech of Stephen. Then came the divine lesson, received so humbly, on the road to Damascus, and in those following days of silence and darkness he was gaining a new conception of the mission of his race. There followed the patient months of meditation and study in Arabia, whither he had retired that

" Separate from the world, his heart
Might duly take and strongly keep
The print of heaven."

And to all this was added the strenuous years of missionary activity reported for us in the Acts, during which years his vision grew in clearness with every onward step.

But of all evidences of growth there is nothing to compare with that contained in the series of epistles which have been so providentially preserved for our instruction. Arranged, however, in order of

length rather than in order of time, the Pauline Epistles are read by most with little appreciation of their developing thought and expanding range. It is difficult to excuse the conservatism which has retained this unhappy order. In the case of the Qūran, the compilers had some excuse for putting the *suras* in order of length, from their entire ignorance of the proper sequence. It might still be regarded as risky to restore the chronological order of the Old Testament prophecies. But there is little or no like excuse for keeping New Testament readers in the dark as to the sequence of S. Paul's letters. We miss both the gradual unfolding of his vision and the advancing power of his teaching faculty.

Let us then, at the outset, recall the contents of the four groups of letters which the Christian Church has accepted as the product of the Apostle's pen.

1. First we have the two Thessalonian epistles on questions mainly of local and temporary interest, consisting of counsels designed to steady the faith of the Christian community in the presence of millennial expectations of the cruder sort. It is not quite clear that the Apostle did not himself

at this time share in some form of this expectation.

2. Next we have the Epistles of the Judæo-Christian controversy, consisting of the four letters to the Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans. The position of the Epistle to the Galatians will, of course, vary according as we accept or reject the North Galatian theory, but will not exclude the letter from this second group. The central thought of all these epistles is the relation of the Jewish law to the principle of Christian liberty.

3. Thirdly, we have the Epistles of the first Roman imprisonment, including the letters to the Churches of Ephesus, Philippi, and Colosse, together with the personal epistle to Philemon, a gentleman of Colosse. The circumstances under which these were composed make them the most important documents of the Apostolic Church, and to them we shall presently recur.

4. Lastly, we have the Epistles of the second Roman imprisonment, the Pastoral Letters to Titus and Timothy, documents the genuineness of which has been frequently disputed but which seem to witness in their every expression to the closing experiences of the Apostle's life.

To go back to the third group, is it hard to conceive

of the visit to the imperial city and of the succeeding months of more or less enforced leisure as providing just the circumstances required in order to call forth the full answer to the question, "What think ye of Christ?" Rome had for long been the goal of S. Paul's desire. It is now the pinnacle from whence he sees in vision the world at the feet of Christ. It is to this climax of his career that we may best apply the words of Mr. Myers :

"Then in the midnight, stirring in his slumber,
Opened his vision on the heights and saw,
New without name or ordinance or number,
Set for a marvel, silent for an awe,
Stars in the firmament above him beaming,
Stars in the firmament alive and free,
Stars and of stars the innumerable streaming,
Deep in the deeps, a river in the sea ;
These as he watched through march of their arising,
Many in multitude and one by one,
Somewhat from God with a superb surprising
Breathed in his eyes the promise of the sun."

It is for this reason, on the side of the Apostle's training, we come to the study of the Epistle to the Colossians with the conviction that we are here encountering the very ripest teaching of the master who for twenty years made experience and teaching the two sides of a wonderful witness, and was now

able, ere the close of his labours, to give to his word the stamp of an inspired finality.

In subject there is no departure from his earliest theme, which is the glory of the Kingdom of Christ, but at the end that glory is as the glory of the noon-day sun as compared with the first beams of the early dawn. The Apostle's final word may well be :

“ Yea, through life, death, through sorrow and through
sinning,
He shall suffice me, for He hath sufficed :
Christ is the end, for Christ is the beginning,
Christ the beginning, for the end is Christ.”

It might appear to some that we have now a sufficient introduction from which to pass to the reading of the Epistle. But it is necessary to view the teaching of the book as the climax to a still more wonderful development than is to be perceived in the training of the Apostle. That training itself is only to be rightly judged in the light of a larger evolution. Indeed, without this larger perspective we might easily, as some have done, fall into the error of misunderstanding S. Paul's place in the history of early Christianity. Not a few have been led through a consideration of the large part played

by the Apostle in the missionary extension of the Church to regard his activity as though it involved a departure from the true line of the Christianity of the Gospels. The Christianity of the Gospels, say these, faded away into the tenets of more or less obscure Jewish sects, while the masterful genius of the Jew of Tarsus imposed its own conceptions of Christianity upon the Roman world. Of course, were there any truth in such a charge, we would have to go anywhere else rather than to the Epistle to the Colossians for an authoritative doctrine of the Christ.

Reassurance comes through our ability to estimate the extent to which the Apostle himself is revealed as an instrument prepared for, trained, and used for larger purposes than were humanly envisaged. As Napoleon is said to have died confessing, in the words, "Head of the army!" a leadership superior to his own, so S. Paul was at all times ready to acknowledge a more masterful policy than anything he had dared to execute or even to conceive. A full Christology is the work of no apostle, however eminent, and must be studied in the light of something larger than the outlook of man. No student of the apostolic career may very well overlook

the significance of those prophetic words in the forty-ninth chapter of Isaiah : " Hearken, ye people from far : the Lord hath called me from the womb ; from the bowels of my mother hath He made mention of my name ; and He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of His hand hath He hid me ; and He hath made me a polished shaft, in His quiver hath He kept me close : and He said unto me, Thou art my servant ; Israel, in whom I will be glorified."

What a background that gives us for the Apostle's life ! The Apostle, indeed, put all his will into the service of the Kingdom, but the helm of that will was never in his own hands. Just take the most cursory survey of his career. S. Paul begins, as from his training seemed so fitting, by an attempt to preach to his fellow countrymen, but, by circumstances outside his own control, the attempt is baffled and he is presently led by other circumstances, providentially arranged, to commence work among the Gentiles. In this work he is again and again deflected from his own programme. If he plans to visit Bithynia, his course is changed, probably by illness, towards the highlands of Galatia. If he prays for a robust body that he may give the fulness

of physical energy to the preaching of the Gospel, he is taught by suffering "My strength is perfected in weakness." If he is anxious to finish up a round of visits in Asia Minor, he is called away by a vision to new work in Europe. If he desires to approach Rome as the untrammelled hero of a conquering cause, he is permitted to attain his goal only as a shackled prisoner. In all this it is plain that the 'masterfulness' was in the Providence which ruled and directed, not in the missionary who served the Divine will.

"He saw a hand they could not see
Which beckoned him away ;
He heard a voice they could not hear
Which would not let him stay."

When we appreciate the full force of this, we shall see why it is that the Epistle to the Colossians is not merely a letter written by one Apostle, but is part of the Bible of the Christian Church. It is for the same reason that the training of S. Paul is but one single episode in that vast *preparatio evangelica* which is coincident with all human history.

It has been with distinct loss to the clearness of our thought of Christianity as a world fact that we have been willing to recognise the evolution of the

substance of the Messianic message without being thoroughly aware of the wonderful way in which is also revealed the evolution of the missionary machinery of Christianity. We read the Old Testament to discover how the world is led on, through animism and henotheism, to the conception of one supreme and universal God ; we see also clearly the evolution of morals, the evolution of religious institutions, the evolution of a religious society, through tribalism and nationalism, to a completer catholicity ; we find ourselves tracing the development of the Messianic idea, till the Christ stands before us as the Suffering Servant of Jehovah. Then, when the substance of the message has been declared, we remain for the most part blind to the divine strategy through which the field of history is prepared for the proclamation of that message to the world.

Let us, ere we close this first lecture, recall some of the manifold ways in which the Divine direction is revealed in a world to whose doubts and difficulties the doctrine of the Incarnation is intended to be the ultimate answer. It is only so that we shall perceive the focal point at which both the Apostle and his message are placed.

In the development of the missionary *machinery* as well as in the development of the Messianic *message* the *Jew* had a leading part to play. The very catastrophe by which Jewish nationalism was shattered and the dispersion brought about was over-ruled to furnish a world-wide pulpit for the proclamation of a Gospel which was to be international and universal. Even the materialism which drove the Jew from city to city in obedience to the claims of commerce was used by God to promote the cause of the spirit, and the very policy which was viewed so suspiciously by the rulers of Jerusalem, by which Judaism became liberalised and centrifugal, created channels along which the stream of Christian teaching could the more readily reach the Gentile world. The ubiquity of the Jew at the beginning of the Christian era is a fact of cardinal importance. "They are everywhere, and everywhere in force, throughout the Roman world. Outside the Roman world their great colonies in Babylon and Mesopotamia are another great headquarters of the race. They are an eighth part (one million) of the population of Egypt: they yield ten thousand at least to one massacre at Antioch." To their number we must add the fact

of the privilege and influence which brought their witness at once to the steps of the throne and the dungeon of the slave as well as to the consciousness of the general population. Wherever dwelt ten men of leisure there was to be found a synagogue in which the Apostles were sure of an interested and perhaps of an excited audience. Where this was lacking, a *proseuché*, as at Philippi, would be found at the riverside to which resorted whatever Jews were in the vicinity. Of all this far-flung witness of Judaism S. Paul was the personal embodiment. All the passion, the ardour, the untiring zeal, the perdurability of Judaism as the Servant of Jehovah came to a head in his missionary career.

In the second place, we are bound to recognise the marvellous share in the creation of means for propagating the faith permitted by God to the civilisation and language of *Greece*. It is difficult to think of a more God-controlled career than that of Alexander the Great. To the secular historian everything may seem easy of explanation. Alexander's eastern conquests were only the counter-movement which followed the failure of the grandiose designs of Darius I. and Xerxes. His success, it may be stated, was predicted by the ease with which

the soldiers of Xenophon had traversed the hostile satrapies. The plan of campaign which led to Alexander's passage through Syria into Egypt and the foundation of Alexandria was only to make secure the Macedonian communications by sea and land. What more natural? Yet, as the writer of the book of Daniel describes, the smiting of the two-horned ram of the Perso-Medic Empire by the mighty horn of the Macedonian he-goat was providentially related to the coming of the Kingdom of the Son of Man. How wonderful have been the results, East and West! Some have quoted the lines of Matthew Arnold as suggesting only a temporary impression:

" The East bowed low before the blast
In patient, deep disdain ;
She let the legions thunder past,
Then plunged in thought again."

Nothing could be further from the truth. The wedge of hellenization driven by Alexander into the heart of Asia influenced the Orient as far as China and down to the present day, and Greek speech and culture reigned in Bactria and Parthia long after the Seleucids had passed away. Then along the pathway cloven to the East influences

came rushing in the reverse direction westward such as were to make religious history for the centuries to come. East and West were brought face to face together, made to speak one another's tongues, and to enter into each other's thought. The creation of a common vernacular for Christendom was as significant as the finding in Judaism of a common pulpit. Think what it meant on the day of Pentecost when Jews of the Dispersion, gathered at Jerusalem, heard the Gospel preached, not in Aramaic or in the Hebrew of the Rabbis, but in the *lingua franca* of the world, the Greek. "We do hear them speak," they cried, "in our own tongue the wonderful works of God." The ambitions of Alexander had been over-ruled and used in order that the vernacular of missionary Christianity might be supplied.

Nor was this all, for in this language, since the time of Ptolemy Philadelphus or Ptolemy Philometor, the Jewish scriptures had circulated among the heathen in the form of the Septuagint version, including the books which, for one reason or another, had been excluded from the Hebrew Canon. We lose much of the significance of the continuous record of revelation in sacred literature when we allow

ourselves to forget that the Old Testament for the Christian is not limited by the decision of the Jewish Council of Joppa. The Septuagint which has appropriately enough been called 'the first apostle to the Gentiles,' is the Old Testament of the Apostles and of the General Councils, nor should we, as against these and the common usage of all primitive Christendom, accept the super-conciliar authority of the British and Foreign Bible Society. In any case, we have to recognise the singular providence which gave the Greek speech its predominance in the world of the Apostles. S. Paul, moreover, is the embodiment of the witness of hellenization for Christ to the world.

In the third place, it is important to recognise also in the *Roman* world an instrument prepared by the hand of God for the same great end. Our ideas on this subject have been coloured for the most part, first, by the Jewish apocalypses which looked expectantly, and vindictively, for the destruction of the blasphemous world-power of Rome, and, secondly, by the Christian hostility to Rome which followed the outbreak of the Neronian persecution. Even S. Paul, in his earliest epistles, seems inclined to take the Jewish attitude in this

respect. But we forget the immense services rendered by Rome to the extension of the Church during the twenty years of S. Paul's missionary activity. It was not merely that the Apostle appreciated the facilities of travel on the magnificent Roman roads, not merely that he claimed at various times the safeguard of his Roman citizenship, and received courtesy at the hands of men like Sergius Paulus and Gallio. It was more important still for the Apostle to gather from the extent of the '*Pax Romana*' and the wide-spread prestige of Roman organisation that vision of a Catholic Christianity which gained strength with the success of his labours. For the material universality of Roman dominion was itself a cry for a world religion, and all the efforts to secure religious catholicity by Emperor-worship, or later by the hospitality given to cults such as Mithraism, were efforts in line with the Apostle's yearning to win the world for Christ. The dream of the Holy Roman Empire was not altogether uninspired, nor was Dante altogether wrong in seeing in the founders of the Empire the servants of the Divine idea. Hence, once again, S. Paul, the Roman citizen, conqueror, organiser, administrator, brings to a focus all that

Rome was inspired to accomplish for the world.

To sum up, he who was so intensely a *Jew* that he was willing to be accursed if only he might lead his people to the fulfilment of their destiny, he who, from his university days at Tarsus, was so sympathetic in his appreciation of the culture of the *Greek* world that he could take a text for a discourse on Areopagus from the pagan classics, he who found so much to admire in the discipline and order of *Roman* soldiership and administration that he could make his own the proud words '*Civis Romanus sum*,' is himself prepared of God to interpret the message which had been written over the Cross in letters of Hebrew and Greek and Latin, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews."

Was he not indeed divinely predestinated to lift up the banner before the eyes of all the world? Was not his passion the accumulated passion of the world to hear and receive the saving Name?

"Lo, as some venturer, from his stars receiving
 Promise and presage of sublime emprise,
 Wears evermore the seal of his believing
 Deep in the dark of solitary eyes,
 So even I, and with a heart more burning,
 So even I, and with a hope more sweet,
 Groan for the hour, O Christ, of Thy returning,
 Faint for the flaming of Thine Advent feet."

To be adequate for such interpretation was the grand purpose of his life's experience. For this it was given him to grow in the wisdom of the missionary whose strategy was planned to convert a world; for this he accepted the sorrows and sufferings of the toiling years that he might learn more and more how effectually his weakness might become the channel of divine strength; for this he was able to grow in intellectual power and expression that at the last he might speak out from full lungs all that God had given him to know. It is this crowning of his message in the Epistle to the Colossians we have set ourselves to study, and I have tried to identify the voice which uttered it with the voice for which all the earth, then and to-day, expectant of redemption, waits.

“Once for the least of children of Manasses
God had a mission and a deed to do,
Wherefore the welcome that all speech surpasses
Called him and hailed him greater than he knew;
Asked him no more but followed him and found him,
Filled him with valour, slung him with a sword,
Bade him go on until the tribes around him
Mingled his name with naming of the Lord.”

CHAPTER II

THE QUESTION

COL. ii. 8: "Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit."

CHAPTER II

LORD SALISBURY, it is said, was accustomed to advise students of foreign politics to 'use large maps.' The advice is as wholesome for Bible students as for would-be diplomatists, and particularly in the case of such a document as the Epistle to the Colossians. Take a large map showing Europe and Western Asia and notice the strategic importance of the peninsula we call Asia Minor. It is the continent of Asia thrust as it were into the heart of the Mediterranean world. Running through Asia Minor you will find the great road from the Euphrates to Ephesus along which Oriental influences travelled to the Occident. Along this road Seleucus Nicator, the inheritor of Alexander's Asiatic dominions, built seventy-five cities, from Seleucia on the Tigris to Laodicæa. In the western section of this great highway, and parallel to it, you will find the valley of the Lycus, the stream which eventually flows into the Maeander. Travellers, from Herodotus

to Ramsay, have described the beautiful and fantastic scenery, the 'natural bridges of gleaming travertine,' the grottoes crusted with calcareous deposits, which the combined forces of water and earthquake have created in the district.

In this valley, almost within sight of one another, lay the three famous cities whose stories can hardly be told apart the one from the other. *Laodicea*, founded in honour of the beautiful Laodice, has obtained for itself, from the letter in the Apocalypse, notoriety for the lukewarmness of its Christian faith, 'neither hot nor cold,' and this unhappy fame is suggested in the tepid stream which reached her from the hot springs of Hierapolis. *Hierapolis*, renowned in the history of the early Church for its Bishop Papias, is also famous as the birthplace of the slave philosopher Epictetus just four or five years before S. Paul wrote his letter to the Colossians. We might even conjecture that the slave boy in the house of his master Epaphroditus may have treasured snatches of the Apostle's counsel to the slaves of Phrygia and Asia when he wrote of God dwelling in the human body. Then there was *Colosse*, of which we must speak a little further. All these towns were well-to-do, surrounded by fertile

territory and busy with the dye-works which spread far and wide the fame of the glossy blacks of Laodicæa and the purples of Colosse.

To-day Colosse is, of the three, the most difficult to identify, but is probably to be discovered in the site of the village Chonai. Earthquakes have played sad havoc with the place, and one feels the force of the Apostle's appeal in i. 23: "Be not *moved away* (lit. earthquake-stricken) from the hope of the Gospel." In the centuries before the Christian era Colosse, or Colassæ (as it is sometimes written) had been a city of considerable size. Herodotus, describing the march of the host of Xerxes, speaks of Colosse as 'a great city of Phrygia,' and Xenophon, in the Anabasis, speaks of it as a 'populous city, prosperous and great.' By the time of Pliny it has sunk from the position of *urbs* to that of *oppidum*, though it is still described as among the 'celeberrima oppida' of the district. It was at this midway point between fame and decadence when S. Paul wrote, and, however well-to-do in itself, was probably the least considerable of the cities to which a New Testament letter was sent.

Yet, like other cities in pro-consular Asia, selected

as representative in the Apocalypse, Colosse, as the meeting-point of East and West, had unusual significance. It was in this district that Roman administration and Greek culture had blended as hardly anywhere else in the Empire, and the organised paganism of the west was manifested in what was best and what was worst. Here, too, was a considerable Jewish population, since to this very neighbourhood Antiochus the Great had forcibly conveyed two thousand families from Babylonia, a movement which was possibly in the Apostle's mind when (i. 13) he spoke of God as having "*translated* us into the kingdom of the Son of His love." Hither, too, had come the elusive speculations of the Orient to fight for place among the official cults. It is plain that the coming of Christianity to such a region constituted a challenge of which the results were to be momentous.

The question will occur: How did the Christian message first reach the city of Colosse? It is fairly certain that it was not through the personal ministry of S. Paul. The Apostle seems to have come to the cities of the Lycus valley, not by the main road but, according to Acts xix. 1, by '*the upper coasts*' (ἀνωτερικὰ μέρη). Moreover, the

Epistle seems to suggest that the Colossians had not hitherto 'seen his face' (ii. 1). It is clear, however, that the evangelisation of Colosse came about during S. Paul's two years' residence at Ephesus, when, according to Acts xix. 19, 'all they that dwelt in Asia' heard the word, and when Demetrius complained that the Apostle's doctrine was spread 'almost throughout all Asia.' The great city of the goddess Artemis was strategically chosen to be the centre for missionary effort throughout the province. It is easy to suppose that it was at this time Philemon of Colosse 'owed his own soul' to the Apostle, that at this time Archippus was ordained for the work in his native valley, that at this time Trophimus and Tychicus entered the ranks of S. Paul's fellow-labourers, and that from Ephesus Epaphras set out on a special mission to his city of Colosse. It is Epaphras (a shortened form of Epaphroditus) who is the real missionary in the community to which our epistle was eventually sent (*cf.* iv., 12). It is this same Epaphras who in course of time arrived at Rome during the Apostle's imprisonment and brought to him news of the faith and love which in general characterised the Colossian Church. He brought also the disquieting reports

which were the immediate cause of the inditing of the letter.

What was the danger which menaced the faith of the Colossian Church and so seriously alarmed the Apostle? Much has been written with regard to the 'Colossian heresy,' but the main features of it may be compressed into a paragraph. The question has been debated at length as to whether the heresy was Jewish or pagan. We may safely say that it was both. The presence of Jewish elements in the errors of Colosse is clear from the references to the danger of formalism in such matters as the keeping of new moons and sabbaths and in the observances of the customary Jewish restrictions. But it should be noted that the formalism here denounced is no longer that of the Galatians, dictated by the desire to make righteousness perfect through the law ; it is rather the result of an ascetic determination to subdue the flesh to the spirit and so attain freedom from the bondage to matter. But this spirit of asceticism, through which regard to the law is enjoined and such rules as "Taste not, touch not, handle not" enforced, is in itself foreign to Judaism. It is nothing else but that protean form of Oriental theosophy, due

to the super-imposition of Zoroastrian dualism upon the old Babylonian worship of the seven planetary gods (*i.e.*, of the sun, moon, and five planets, still suggested in the names of the days of the week). There is no need to call it *Essenism*, though Palestinian Essenism, such as is alluded to by Josephus and Pliny, was probably influenced by similar contacts with the Orient. Nor need we call it *Gnosticism*, though the Gnostic systems are developed also under similar circumstances. It is one attempt among many to nullify the essential message of Christianity by substituting for that message a syncretism of Jewish and pagan ideas.

Let us attempt a more intimate acquaintance with the philosophical side of this particular question. The fundamental intellectual difficulty which confronted men, then as to-day, was how to reconcile the absolutism of God with the act of creation. Did God create the world out of nothing? If so, the statement was equivalent to the assertion that all things proceeded out of Himself. Consequently, the problem of evil, out of which (with the granting of freedom to the human will) sprang the problem of sin, was due to God, and God must be regarded as

the author of evil. From this conclusion men revolted. Hence arose the disposition to assign evil to a separate order of things, and so, in one form or another, to establish a categorical dualism. The identification of the evil half of this dualism with Matter, or *Hyle* (ἡλὴ) brought back the first problem in another form. How could the infinite God, the Lord of spirit, come into touch with matter in such a way as to be, in any real sense of the word, Creator of all things 'visible and invisible'? In two ways, it was replied; either by a series of *falls* on the part of Deity in which the passion of God involved Him in the material and evil realm, or else by the sending forth of a number of *æons* or emanations which should eventually establish contact with the world of matter. Thus, as in the old Babylonian ziggurat-worship, God was supposed to project His presence downward to men through the seven planetary gods, and men in return were thought to reach up to God by the aid of these intervening 'principalities and powers.' So God and man became remotely and indirectly related.

The antagonism thus postulated between spirit and matter, between the infinite and the finite, led inevitably to serious error both theological and

practical. On the theological side it induced the worship of beings who were supposed to be intermediate between Man and God, '*world-rulers*' (κοσμοκράτορες), as the Apostle calls them, arranged in a mystical hierarchy of Angels, Archangels, Thrones, Dominions, Virtues, Principalities, and Powers. This was surely to dethrone Christ from His place, as the 'One Mediator'. On the practical side, moreover, there was the disposition to separate men into the two categories of Spiritual (ψυχικοί) and Material (ύλικοί), with a curiously divergent result. On the one hand, men imposed upon themselves all kinds of ascetic restrictions: "Touch not, taste not, handle not"; and, on the other hand, they plunged with equal fanaticism into every excess of carnal license. On the one hand, they sought to rise to things spiritual by extreme mortification of the flesh; on the other hand, they regarded matter as so hopelessly evil that it mattered not at all into what depths of mire the flesh was flung.

Here we have in brief the danger discussed by the Apostle with the Colossians. With infallible and inspired instinct he perceived that the worship of these Christians of Asia was being given to angels rather than to Christ, and that their morals

were being swayed by alternate tides of asceticism and antinomianism. The subsequent history of the communities in the Lycus valley affords still further illustration of the danger. Is it not this which gives such point to the warnings of the Seer as to the danger of angel-worship in the Apocalypse (xxii. 9)? Have we not illustration of it also in the history of Cerinthus, related by Polycarp and reported for us by Irenæus and Eusebius? Well might S. John hesitate to greet as a brother one whose theology made the God of the Jews only an Angel, a *Demiurgus*, or 'underworker,' such as Plato had spoken of in the '*Timæus*,' and whose Christology reduced the Christ to the position of the temporary tabernacle of the *Pleroma*, or Fulness! Moreover, in the light of the Epistle, we understand better the significance of the frequent dedication of Churches in the neighbourhood to angels and archangels. We read between the lines of the story told by a native of Colosse, Nicetas of Chonium, how the archangel Michael saved the Colossians from the waters of an inundation by breaking a passage through at the chasm where, in memory of the event, was erected "The Church of the Archangel." Once again, we understand better

the reason for the Canon of Laodiceæ, about A.D. 344, forbidding the worship of angels. We shall come presently to the Apostle's remedy for this plausible and dangerous heresy, but, before reaching this point, it is necessary to recognise the universal and age-long interest of mankind in the problem which is thus confronted.

The idea of the creation of the world by a good, wise, and omnipotent God still involves the greatest of all miracles, one before which all other miracles, as miracles, sink into insignificance. The difficulty was felt by S. Augustine even in connection with the Christian obligation of prayer. "How shall I call upon my God," he writes in the *Confessions*, "God and my Lord? For I call Him into myself when I call upon Him. And what room is there in me, where my God may enter in, where God may enter in, God Who made Heaven and earth?" To us to-day it is not merely the relation of good and evil which is involved, but rather the relation of the infinite to the finite. Does it not appear that the self-limitation implied by the contact of the perfect with the imperfect, of the eternal with the temporal, of the omniscient with the ignorant, of the spiritual with the material, involves something

like a contradiction of terms? The intellect is staggered at the very contemplation of the problem.

Yet man has insisted on offering his solutions and these fall either into the category of some form of *monism* or into that of some form of *dualism*.

On the *monistic* side we have, first of all, the *Indian* solution which is expressed ultimately in the interpretation of the Upanishads known as the Vedanta. Everything is here explained by a categorically monistic idealism which declares there is 'one only without a second.' According to such a theory there is no such thing as creation, only the illusion produced in the soul overspread by ignorance. Deceived by *Māya*, we conceive of the universe as proceeding from the breath of Brahma in prodigious cycles of imaginary evolution, only to be drawn back into its original nothingness at the end of the *kalpa*. Neither the universe nor we ourselves have any substance of reality—

" The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And, like this unsubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind."

A second form of Oriental monism, less categorical

in its character, is the Muhammadan mysticism known as *Sufism*, in which the soul in its quest for fellowship with God finds itself at last absorbed in the Absolute. To many of the Sufic poets of Persia, possibly influenced by Vedantism, there is only one reality, viz. God.

On the side of *dualism* we have a whole chain of systems in close historic contact. Earliest of all we have the old *Babylonian*, or older Sumerian, system which laid the foundation for all the dualisms which flourished subsequently in the valley of the Euphrates. With the spectacle constantly before their eyes, at the head of the Persian gulf, of the process whereby the struggle of sea and land created alluvial tracts such as gave civilisation a foothold, men found it easy to mythologise. It was natural to conceive of Marduk, son of the sky-god, lord of the shining solar ray, as coming forth to war with the monster Tiamât (Heb. '*tehom*'), demon of chaos, lord of disorder and the dark. It was natural, moreover, to translate creed into religion by rearing the storied *ziggurats* by means of which men might climb through the spheres of sun and moon and the five planets to fellowship with God most high.

On this Babylonian foundation *Zoroastrianism* built, superseding the sky-god Anu with Ahura-mazda, the Lord of Wisdom, turning Tiamât, or Chaos, into Angra-mainyu, the '*Counter-worker*,' and replacing the planetary gods with the Amesha-spentas, or seven spirits of Ahura-mazda. Then the story of creation is the story of the making of the 'sixteen good lands' by Ahura-mazda, followed up and parodied by Angra-mainyu, who is all evil. As in Kipling's fragment entitled *The Seven Nights of Creation*, no sooner does Ahura-mazda complete a stage of his perfect work than the Counterworker appears to mar and frustrate the labour. Only dimly did the Zoroastrian discern any satisfactory end, through the coming of Sosiosh, to so desperate and prolonged a conflict.

It is obvious that the various forms of *Gnosticism* from their earliest manifestation, associated traditionally with the name of Simon Magus, to the developed systems of Basilides and Valentinus, owe much to the Persian faith, though it is also obvious that attempts were made to Christianise the general theory. Here creation is the result of a series of emanations and, sometimes all emanations, sometimes only the last, the Demiurgus, came to b

considered as the Creator of the world. The Christ is variously interpreted, but He always falls short of that dignity and pre-eminence assigned to Him in the New Testament. Men still have painfully to climb up through the planetary spheres, as in the Zoroastrian book of Arda Viraf, like Muhammad in the *Night Ride*, or like Dante in the *Paradiso*. But the Gnostic world-rulers have now become the seven orders of Angels, Archangels, Principalities, Powers, Virtues, Dominions and Thrones. The fundamental idea throughout is still that God is necessarily remote from matter, as from an evil thing, and man still dependent upon the assistance of some 'lesser god.'

A little later, in the third century A.D., appeared that strange eclectic system which came so dangerously near to being a world-religion, the system whose catechisms were taught from North Africa to China, whose martyrs were burned at York and Orleans, as well as flayed alive in Persia, whose teachings were only suppressed in fire and blood in the massacre of the Albigenses of the thirteenth century. To the *Manichæan* there was one long frontier between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. For ages the powers of darkness fought

only among themselves, but one day they looked on the light and, hating it, resolved to overcome it. So a monstrous being called Satan was created and led his forces into the realm of light. God, unwilling to send against the invader any higher being, created man to repel the raid. The result was that man, insufficiently equipped for the conflict, was defeated and thereupon became tangled up with the darkness. Then God created the present world to be the place of combat between the powers of light and darkness, to endure till the last particle of spirit had been rescued from its captivity. So the great system of the planets was supposed to move, like an Oriental water-wheel, each planet like a bucket designed to bring up the redeemed element from the dark and discharge it into the column of glory. When at length the work shall have been accomplished, the earth is to be destroyed by fire and the eternal frontier between the light and the dark established again for ever.

Echoes of these old voices have not ceased to sound in the ears of men, and Tennyson himself is said to have been at times not indisposed to accept the philosophy he has put upon the lips of the dying Arthur :

" I found Him in the shining of the stars,
I marked Him in the flowering of His fields,
But in His ways with men I find Him not.
I waged His wars and now I pass and die.

" O me ! for why is all around us here
As if some lesser god had made the world
But had not power to shape it as he would,
Till the high God behold it from afar,
And enter it and make it beautiful."¹

In general it may be said that all forms of error due to deflection from the doctrine of the Incarnation swing either in the direction of the Monism which obliterates distinctions between God and the world, or else in the direction of the Dualism which imposes eternal barriers between. On the one side, we see the danger of *Mysticism* which craves that, instead of true fellowship, ' to lose ourselves ' in the ocean of Divine Love ; on the other side, is the *Calvinism* which leaves whole regions of the universe for ever unreconciled to God by the Incarnate Christ.

Against all these errors, outside and within the Christian fold, S. Paul lifts up in the Epistle to the Colossians one clear and sufficing answer in the doctrine of the Incarnation as it has come to him by revelation and the experience of grace.

¹ Cf. Flournoy, "Le Génie Religieux" : " If God exists He has been from the beginning in conflict with some independent Principle whence Evil is derived. He is therefore not the Absolute, the All-powerful, the omnipotent Creator of this Universe, and we must revert inevitably to the ancient Manichaean doctrine."

Of this we shall speak in the succeeding lecture. In the meantime it will suffice to recognise the challenge which Christianity flung in the presence of all who demanded an intelligible cosmos. As Professor Santayana has declared: "Had the Gnostic or Manichæan heresies been victorious, Christianity would have been reduced to a floating speculation." This S. Paul perceived, and leaped into the fray. Where Gnosticism made Matter the antipodes of God, the Apostle sets forth the Incarnation as bringing God out of the remoteness into Matter itself. Where Gnosticism made of Matter the realm of evil, the Incarnation is shown to reveal it as the very Body of God. Where Gnosticism made of it an obstacle to progress, the Incarnation manifests it as the sacramental medium through which God approaches the human soul. Where Gnosticism required a chain of principalities and powers by means of which a man might climb up to God, the Incarnation proclaims an ever-present and all-sufficient Mediator, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, at once Son of Man and Son of God. Where Gnosticism made of creation a degrading and defiling thing, the Christian doctrine reveals it as the very climax of Divine Love, the perfecting

of the Divine existence by participation in the experience of the finite, even as it is the prophecy of the completing of human existence by participation in the infinite. In a word, as Mr. Wells so passionately demanded through the mouth of '*Mr. Britling*,' God is our closest companion in all the pilgrimage and struggle of life. Human language flags and fails in the effort to express what the Christ-centred life enables us to feel, but we can enter sympathetically into the lines of *The Creation* of Alfred Noyes :

" Formless it was, being gold on gold,
And void—but with that complete life
Where music could no wings unfold,
Till, lo, God smote the strings of strife !
' Myself unto Myself am Throne,
Myself unto Myself am Thrall :
I that am all am all alone,'
He said, ' Yea, I have nothing, having all.'

" ' Enough,' His angels moaned in fear,
' Father, Thy words have pierced Thy side.'
He whispered, ' Roses shall grow there,
And there must be a hawthorn-tide,
And ferns, dewy at dawn,' and still
They moaned, ' Enough, the red drops bleed.'
' And,' sweet and low, ' on every hill,'
He said, ' I will have flocks and lambs to lead.'

" His angels bowed their heads beneath
Their wings till that great pang was gone :
' Pour not Thy soul out unto Death,'
They moaned, and still His love flowed on.
' There shall be small white wings to stray
From bliss to bliss, from bloom to bloom,
And blue flowers in the wheat ; and ' ' Stay !
Speak not,' they cried, ' the word that seals Thy tomb ! '

" He spake : ' I have thought of a little child
That I will have there to embark
On small adventures in the wild,
And front slight perils in the dark ;
And I will hide from him and lure
His laughing eyes with suns and moons,
And rainbows that shall not endure ;
And, when he is weary, sing him drowsy tunes.'

" His angels fell before Him weeping,
' Enough, tempt not the gates of hell ! '
He said : ' His soul is in his keeping
That we may love each other well,
And lest the dark too much affright him,
I will strow countless little stars
Across his childish skies to light him,
That he may wage in peace his mimic wars ;

" And, when he is older, he shall be
My friend and walk here at My side ;
Or, when he wills, grow young with Me,
And, to that happy world where once we died,
Descending through the calm blue weather,
Buy life once more with our immortal breath,
And wander through the little fields together
And taste of Love and Death ! ' "

CHAPTER III

THE ANSWER

COL. i. 19: "For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in Him should all the fulness dwell."

CHAPTER III

IN the previous chapters we have followed two general lines of evolution, one of which leads us to the message delivered by S. Paul, the other to that expression of human need which appears in the speculations of the Colossian Christians. It is now necessary to combine these and see in S. Paul's letter the Divine Word addressed to us, and in the Colossian error our own danger for which the words of Holy Scripture provide the remedy.

Let us go back for a moment to the two geographical points which the Epistle suggests. First, we place ourselves in the hired lodging of the Apostle at Rome. It was not, in all probability, in the Jewish quarter, where resided some sixty thousand of S. Paul's fellow countrymen, but almost certainly in the neighbourhood of the Prætorian camp, whence surveillance over the prisoners awaiting trial might be the more easily exercised. It is likely that a considerable time must elapse before

the Apostle could be called up for trial, and the time of waiting, under ordinary circumstances, must have been incredibly tedious. Yet, so keen was S. Paul's sense of the human, that we can easily imagine him eager to use the time, if not in direct missionary work, still in establishing very sympathetic relations with his keepers. Chief, however, of all his pleasures would be the occasional arrival of fellow-labourers from the Churches of Macedonia, Achaia, or Asia, who, out of love for their master, willingly accepted restraint and became his fellow-prisoners. In this way he was more than once reminded of the little Christian community at Colosse. First came the evangelist Epaphras with the news, both comforting and disconcerting, of Church conditions in the Lycus valley. Then one day came, or was brought to him, the runaway slave, Onesimus, the property of the Apostle's Colossian friend, Philemon, and the conversion of the fugitive drew with it the obligation to return him as speedily as might be to his owner. So it came to pass that when at length the messenger, Tychicus, was ready to depart for Asia, S. Paul was enabled to dispatch three letters, one to Philemon commending the slave who had now become a brother, one to the

Church of Laodicæa, a letter now either lost or known to us under another name, and one most memorable letter to the Church at Colosse. This epistle, in the providence of God, has become part of the Word of God to all mankind.

Now journeying in spirit to Colosse we may mark the interest with which Tychicus is welcomed as the emissary of the prisoner at Rome. We note how eagerly the list of greetings is scanned, how seriously the assembled Christians regard the affectionate warnings which come warm from the heart of their beloved teacher. We must put ourselves in the attitude of these Colossians in order to perceive that their need is our very own, and that God speaks to supply that need to-day as then. It is only when we read the letter with the expectant freshness that must have marked the Colossians eighteen centuries ago, that we shall understand how marvellously it speaks to our own heart's desire.

For to-day the need of appreciating the full significance of the doctrine of Christ is as great as ever. The all-sufficiency of the mediatorial work of Christ is still the solution of all problems, the answer to every doubt. It is therefore the more unfortunate that to-day, as in the time of S. Paul,

we are constantly confronted by inadequate presentations of Christianity such as obscure that essential message of Christ to the world. One of the most wide-spread of modern Christian movements is that which was known as the 'Back to Christ' movement, one commended by not a few distinguished teachers of the age. There was some initial value in the school, since it represented a return swing of the pendulum from the teaching which made of Christ chiefly a metaphysical conception. To many the 'Back to Christ' movement provided, almost for the first time, a real *milieu*, historical and geographical, for the Incarnate life. Through archæology, biography, poetry and art, it gave a human and realistic idea of Christ which had for a long time been sorely lacking. But presently, for want of a proper synthesis, the very conditions Christ died to remove, as limitations to the faith of the disciples, were brought back in full flood. The Master had slept in the boat to awaken in His pupils faith in One Who neither slumbers nor sleeps ; He had remained praying in the mountain while they were tossed upon the storm-swept lake in order that they might learn something of a presence closer than that of the flesh ; He had removed Himself

from the eyes of men in the very act of promising to be with the Church 'all the days.' Yet here were men to-day yearning for the presence which, in the light of fuller revelation, was but absence, craving to know Him again after the flesh and thus only, seeking to tread again the old paths from which He had passed into the Heavens.

It was more or less inevitable that, in a world where the eternal High-priesthood of Christ had been so largely superseded by a looking back to the Galilean days, or by no less misleading millennial dreams as to the future, there should arise temptations to fill the gap so gratuitously created by speculations not unlike those which arrested the development of the Asiatic churches and vexed the soul of the great Apostle. The vagaries of the day are found, new as they sometimes seem, only to revive the vagaries of yesterday, and the material Occident repeats again and again the speculations of the theosophic Orient.

For all these, as pertinently now as nineteen centuries ago, the answer is in the proclamation of that truth to which S. Paul bears witness and to which we pay instinctive reverence as we repeat the affirmation of the Creed:

“ One Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God ;
Begotten of His Father before all worlds,
God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God ;
Begotten, not made ; Being of one substance with the
Father ;
By whom all things were made ;
Who for us men and for our salvation came down from
heaven,
And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin
Mary,
And was made man.”

This Christ, the realisation of the ‘ *Immanuel* ’ message—God with us—is the predestined victor over all the doubts and difficulties of the present, even as He has been the triumphant conqueror of all the false philosophies of the past.

Let us patiently, New Testament in hand, endeavour now to catch something of the meaning of the Divine message as it comes to us from the Apostle’s pen.

First, let us note the writer’s approach to his great theme. It is necessary to introduce himself, and in such a way as to secure an attentive and sympathetic hearing. So we have (i. 1-2) the *Salutation*. We feel that we are indeed taking a course in Pastoral Theology when we mark the mingled authority and humility with which the Apostle establishes contact with his readers ; the

authority which proclaims him the Apostle 'by the will of God'; the humility which associates with the writer Timothy the beloved and trusted companion. Let us note again, another important hint as to pastoral method, how in this same salutation the Apostle builds all he has to say on the rock of the present privilege of the Christian. What a starting-point is theirs at Colosse! Those to whom the Apostle writes are *Saints*, in the potential holiness assured them by the fact of their baptism; they are *Believers*, and so bound to God in the bonds of a living faith; they are also *Brethren*, and so bound to one another by the ties of mutual love. Moreover, since Christ is the sum and substance of the whole message which is to follow, the Apostle must remind them that, by the very conditions of their profession, they are, now and always, 'In Christ.'

Next (i. 3-8) we have, as is usual in the Pauline Epistles (the Epistle to the Galatians is an exception, the *Thanksgiving*, introduced, not with any idea of compliment or flattery, but out of sincere recognition before God of the good things reported by Epaphras. These are three in number, viz., the *Faith* which the Colossians had shown towards

Christ, their Master ; the *Love* which they had manifested towards their fellow-members ; and the forward-looking *Hope* which constitutes so assured a hold on heavenly things.

To the Thanksgiving is added the *Prayer* (i. 9-14), and no one of the Apostle's prayers is better worth the studying than this. Several outstanding features will be at once apparent.

1. There is the use by the Apostle of the Gnostic terminology, a use which has sometimes been urged as a ground for doubting the genuineness of the Epistle, but which is most natural when we think of the writer as anxious to display the full scope of the Christian creed. He will not stand upon the use or disuse of mere terms. If they are not content with his, he is willing to use theirs, and show, nevertheless, that Christ answers to all they sought, under one set of words or under another. We might well gather from this fact a lesson for ourselves. To-day, as then, people often find comfort in words, even when the words have become for them a kind of jargon. The 'blessed word, Mesopotamia' has much virtue. To meet the case, the teachers of the Church, who perhaps, in clinging to the language of their theological schools, are not without their

own jargon, might well strive to 'de-polarise' their terms in the interest of common understanding and common acceptance. This is how I understand S. Paul's use, at the very beginning of the Epistle, even in his prayer to God, of terms like *Pleroma* (Fulness), *Epignosis* (Full Knowledge), *Sophia* (Wisdom), and *Synesis* (Understanding). The mis-use of these terms in the interests of heresy shall not preclude their use in the case of truth.

2. It is in line with this use of terms that the Apostle reveals from the outset that orthodoxy is not limiting, cramping, or confining, but is the Christian claim to enjoy in belief and experience the maximum rather than the minimum. If this were always duly set forth, we should not have people leaving a supposedly 'narrow' communion for something 'broad' and 'liberal.' What could be more liberal than this prayer that men may be 'filled'? What intellectual goal could be set higher than the 'full knowledge' of God's will? What conception of life could be richer than that which asks of God 'every kind of wisdom and understanding'? Christians fail by asking too little, never by expecting too much. They ask, as Bishop Brooks used to say, for crutches when they ought

to be asking for wings. They are like the one in Emerson's poem to whom the Days offered—

" Bread, kingdoms, stars, and sky that holds them all,
I, in my pleached bower, watched the pomp,
Forgot my morning wishes, hastily
Took a few herbs and apples, and the Day
Turned and departed silent, I, too late,
Under her solemn fillet saw the scorn."

3. The Prayer maps out the proper development of the Christian life. There is, first, its source in the 'full knowledge' of God's will; next, its course in the daily, worthy walk; then the four branches, like the streams of Paradise, namely, fruitfulness in good works, increase in the knowledge of God's will, strengthening unto patience and long-suffering, and (as the climax) the attitude of thanksgiving which transforms life into an abiding Eucharist. What prayer could so fittingly predict the triumph of life!

The introduction of the word 'thanksgiving' brings the Apostle, in the most natural way in the world, to the real starting-point of his argument. Just as in the Church Catechism the privileges which are assured us by God are set forth before our own responsibilities are recited, so here the Apostle is

careful to insist that the Christian must build upon the solid reality of what God has already effected. It is not for men, by painful scrupulosities of asceticism, to climb up to difficult access to God ; it is rather theirs to recognise that God has already in Christ broken through every intervening barrier and won eternal victory over the powers of darkness. Antiochus had only brought away two thousand reluctant families to dwell within the valley of the Lycus, but God has ransomed all humanity from the powers of evil and has, by baptism, translated His children into the kingdom of the Son of His love. The slaves who have already been redeemed do not have again to redeem themselves. Here and now, in the experience of the Christian life, men are face to face with the privileges and therefore with the responsibilities of the new citizenship. We are 'meet to be partakers,' not in the sense of being 'fit,' but as made competent (so the Greek *ικανώσαντι* implies) to use our inheritance. We are, in the language of the Catechism, 'members of Christ, children of God, inheritors of the Kingdom of heaven.' From no other point than this must the Christian start. "Full right," the Apostle would say, "is thine":

"Thou hast it ; use it, and forthwith, or die !
 For I say, this is death, and the sole death,
 When a man's loss comes to him through his gain,
 Darkness from light, from knowledge ignorance,
 And lack of love from love made manifest."

Such is the Apostle's introduction to his great theme. The way is now clear for the setting forth of the Christ as in very truth accomplishing for men all that the human heart has sighed and struggled for, and, apparently, alas, in vain.

Let us now address ourselves to the theme itself, as set forth in the passage i. 15-23, under the three following heads :

1. *The relation of Christ to the Father.*
2. *The relation of Christ to Nature.*
3. *The relation of Christ to the Church.*

1. *The relation of Christ to the Father.* This is given us in one single phrase, "the image of the invisible God." The Apostle uses a word which had already been rendered familiar by Philo in connection with his doctrine of the Logos. This word, translated '*image*,' and corresponding fairly well with the word used in Hebrews i. 3 (χαρακτήρ), implies literally the picture of a ruler stamped upon a coin. Like the image of Cæsar on the coin

brought to Jesus by the Pharisees, the revelation of Christ brings home to men the Supreme Ruler of the Universe in His perfect likeness, His full representativeness, and in the completeness of His manifestation. Or, to use another illustration, as in some Italian picture-gallery where the mirror on the floor enables you to study the fresco on the ceiling, the revelation of Christ makes it possible for man to see what would otherwise be beyond all human vision.

No religion may tolerate a deism in which God is eternally remote from fellowship with men. Mr. H. G. Wells was not the original discoverer of the need of something better than a merely transcendental God. Tagore's *King of the Dark Chamber*, it is true, emphasises in beautiful form the needed truth, "Blessed are they who have not seen, but yet have believed," but there is a considerable difference between the 'gracious twilights where God's chosen lie' and the 'thick darkness' in which God is supposed to dwell for ever hid. The Indian poet's Unitarianism tells but half the truth, and Queen Sudarshana may well crave for a more human fellowship than her lord vouchsafes, if she is to be saved from the 'trumped-up kings.'

Nevertheless, it is plain that no ray of Godhead, unmediated by compassion for human weakness, may reach the mind of man without ruin and blasting. The Talmudic story relates that, had the prayer of Moses that he might see God face to face been granted, one spark of the Divine presence must have scorched him to a cinder. As the poet puts it :

“ Pure faith indeed—you know not what you ask !
Naked belief in God the Omnipotent,
Omniscient, Omnipresent, sears too much
The sense of conscious creatures to be borne.
It were the seeing Him no flesh shall dare.
Under the vertical sun the exposed brain,
And lidless eye and disemprisoned heart
Less certainly would wither up at once
Than mind, confronted with the truth of Him.”

Nor, once again, is the void between God and Man to be bridged satisfactorily by any chain of beings ‘ half abstractions and half persons,’ such as may link gradually together the material and the spiritual. Men crave touch with no *Demiurgus*, no journeyman God, taking up our problems with apprentice hand. They are not, with the rebels of Israel, to appeal to some mediator such as Moses : “ Speak thou to us and we will hear ; let not the Lord speak to us lest we die.” Rather, with the

author of the '*Imitatio*' will they pray: "Not thus, O Lord, not thus do I pray; but rather with Samuel the prophet I humbly and longingly entreat Thee: Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." All this the Christ makes possible, for He makes God present and visible. He fills the universe from depth to height with God, and makes the human soul His Holy of Holies. All the half-gods go when He appears; even Moses and Elias fade out of sight, and 'Jesus is left alone.'

2. *The relation of Christ to Nature.* This is expressed more fully, but the essence of it all is in the first clause, "The first-born of every creation." The thought is in complete harmony with other expressions in Scripture, and two passages will at once leap to the memory: i. *In Rom. viii. 19 ff.* all creation from the lowest to the highest is described as lifting up its head in hope from the groanings which are themselves the prophecies of a completeness to come. It is to Christ all things look for the revelation of the meaning which is bound up in the age-long struggle and for the glory which is life's true goal. ii. *Rev. iv. 6 ff.* gives us that wonderful picture, reflected in Jan Van Eyck's famous Altar-piece of Ghent, where all circles of

created things bend in adoration around the "Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world." Here the Four Living Ones proclaim the confidence of universal Nature that the Love of God, displayed in the sacrifice of Christ, offers adequate explanation of the purpose and end of created life.

Putting together such passages as these, passages which lay the foundation for the only reverent and comprehensive conception of Natural Science, we are able to summarise what S. Paul would here emphasise for the Colossian Christians.

First, we find Christ establishing the *Unity* of Creation. There can be, His place therein being understood, no such thing in the Cosmos as anarchy. All realms of Nature are held together by the Divine Presence. The genealogy of the Christ reaches not only to the Jew, but, as even the Jewish Gospel of S. Matthew reminds us, through the Jew to foreigners like Rahab, and Ruth, and Bathsheba. Nay, more, back to primitive man, and to the anthropoid ape, and to the protoplasm which first stirred with life from God. Caliban, as well as David, is the ancestor of Jesus, the Heidelberg man as well as Plato. Expel, if you will, the Divine intervention in the story of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and, lo, you are

forced to admit it at the starting of the line. Whatever gaps may lie between, the words, "Which was the son of Adam" necessitate at last the final link, "Which was the Son of God."

Secondly, we see Christ as interpreting for us the universal *Experience* of Nature. He enables us to understand not merely the sufferings of men on fields of battle and in hospital wards, but the sufferings also of the brute creation, all the way from the modern slaughterhouse to the time when the dragons tare one another in the primeval slime. The claim of Amida, "Where the gnat cries, there am I," is much more essentially Christian than it is Buddhist. S. Francis was not going beyond the scope of his evangel in preaching to the fishes and in converting the wolf of Gubbio. William Blake was not merely the mystic when, in answer to the question, "Little Lamb, who made thee?" he sang:

" Little lamb, I'll tell thee ;
 Little lamb, I'll tell thee ;
 He is called by thy name,
 For He calls Himself a Lamb.
 He is meek and He is mild,
 He became a little child.
 I a child, and thou a lamb,
 We are called by His name.
 Little lamb, God bless thee !
 Little lamb, God bless thee ! "

Nor was it mere sentiment which produced the lines of Ralph Hodgson :

“ 'Twould ring the bells of Heaven,
The wildest peal for years,
If parson lost his senses,
And people came to theirs ;
And he and they together
Knelt down with angry prayers
For tamed and shabby tigers,
And dancing dogs and bears,
And wretched, blind pit-ponies,
And little hunted hares.”

Or these others of Robert Graves in “ Christ in the Wilderness ” :

“ Basilisk, cockatrice,
Flocked to His homilies,
Great rats on leather wings,
And poor, blind, broken things,
And ever with Him went,
Of all His wanderings
Comrade, with ragged coat,
Gaunt ribs—poor innocent—
Bleeding foot, burning throat,
The guileless old scape-goat.”

Thirdly, we see Christ as establishing for us the essential *Goodness* of the universe, considered not in its present stage of imperfection, but in the light of the glory to be revealed. In other words, as we are expected to see men ‘non quales sumus, sed

quales futuri sumus,' so we are to judge even the present 'naughty world' in the light of the great redemption which is to be. How much of the present unreal, if not hypocritical, depreciation of this world would become impossible if we were more continuously expectant through Christ of that great climax of evolution which is to justify the existence of things material as well as spiritual, of things present as well as of things to come. The whole universe becomes a real Universe by becoming Christo-centric. It is revealed as 'in Him' because He is its creative centre; it is 'through Him' because carried on to its goal by "the Love that moves the sun and th' other stars"; it is 'unto Him' as perceiving in Him its goal. All things cohere in Him Who 'holds up with His pierced hands the whole Creation.'

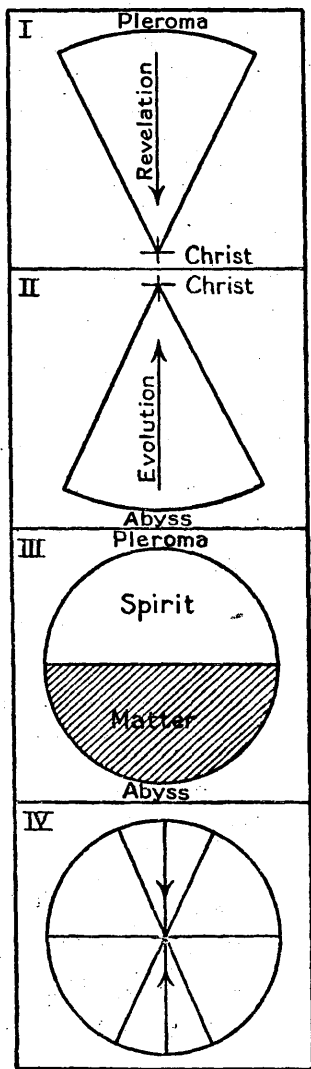
3. *The relation of Christ to the Church.* Christ is "the Head of the Body, the Church." If Christ, as the revelation of God, draws all things downward from the *Pleroma* to Himself, and if, as the revelation of Nature, He draws all things upward, even from the Abyss, to Him, the circle struck from such a centre, with so wonderful a radius above and below, must describe for us the completeness of that Body

in which Christ is all in all. In that Body Christ is the Head, not merely as the source of authority but as the source of life. The Christian may not regard Christ primarily as the *Teacher*, for in such a case he must be mainly occupied with learning what Christ taught rather than what Christ is. Nor is he to think of Christ primarily as the *Example*, since in this case religion would be for the most part an imitation of what Christ did. But Christ is primarily *Life*. He is the Head of the Body, not in the sense of being first in a series, as was Muhammad in relation to the Khalifs, but as being the first Principle (ἀρχή), '*Principium principians*,' not '*Principium principiatum*.' His life, moreover, is the pledge of our own, and since He has been victorious over death, 'because He lives, we shall live also.' The Body, with all its members, is safe, because of the immortality of the Head.

Three movements have been described which I may express perhaps more clearly by diagram. First, we have the revelation of the Father in the Son which, starting from the fact of God's Transcendence, expresses all history in terms of the Devolution of God. The climax to this process is the Christ, the Son of God.

Secondly, the Ascent of Creation which, starting from the fact of God's Immanence, expresses the selfsame history in terms of the Evolution of Nature. To this process the climax is the Christ, the Son of Man.

Now no longer must the Universe be conceived, as in III., an eternal Dualism wherein Matter remains for ever subject to the realm of Darkness, and God is excluded from one half the whole, but as in IV., one infinite realm, the ideal Church, in which the power of the Cross extends 'higher than the highest heaven, deeper than the deepest hell,'



and represents the victory of the height and depth and breadth of the Almighty Love. What is all this but a feeble attempt to paraphrase the Apostle's triumphant assertion of the presence of the Pleroma here and now in the Christ through Whom God has drawn near to Man? All 'the Fulness,' he declares, dwells permanently and perfectly (such is the force of the word κατοικεί) in Him. There is no need for the saint to climb to the moon sphere, or the planet spheres, in order to bask in the glory of the Beatific Vision. All this is superseded for ever by the present privilege of 'the sons of God.' The Heaven in which God dwells is all about us; 'Closer is He than breathing, nearer than hands and feet.' The lesson of the rhyme is true:

" The parish priest of Austerity
 Climbed to the high church steeple
 To be near God, that he might bring
 God down unto the people.
 Then in wrath God cried :
 ' Come down from your high church steeple ! '
 ' Where art Thou, Lord ? ' and the Lord replied,
 ' Down here, among the people."

The revelation of the *Fulness* is also the *Reconciliation*, since henceforth is abolished the long frontier between the material and the spiritual. Deliverance

from the evil world is found in Christ, not in acts of asceticism, however numerous and painful.

No wonder the Apostle is confident that in the light of so resplendent a truth there is no need for the Christian to seek a fuller wisdom or a profounder philosophy. To the fickle Galatians he had held up Christ Crucified as the cure for all wandering hearts seduced to error by the basilisk eye of evil. With no less conviction he would present to the Colossians the figure of the Christ Who is the Eternal Word, Centre of a new Universe in which all things find place in one redeeming plan. It is S. Paul's word to the Colossians ; it is no less the Word of God to ourselves to-day. Now as then it is the great emancipating thought which should carry us through all the doubts and difficulties of a tangled time, even as S. Patrick's '*Breastplate*' carried the saint through the moors and forests of pagan Erin :

“ Christ with me, Christ within me,
 Christ behind me, Christ before me,
 Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
 Christ to comfort and restore me,
 Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
 Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
 Christ in hearts of all that love me,
 Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

" I bind unto myself the Name,
The strong Name of the Trinity ;
By invocation of the same,
The Three in One, the One in Three.
Of Whom all Nature hath creation ;
Eternal Father, Spirit, Word :
Praise to the Lord of my salvation,
Salvation is of Christ the Lord."

CHAPTER IV

THE ARGUMENT

COL. ii. 6 : " As therefore ye received the Christ, Jesus the Lord, in Him walk."

CHAPTER IV

THE actual statement of S. Paul's Christology is complete with the twenty-third verse of the first chapter. Christ is the full revelation of the Infinite God ; He is the climax of the whole evolutionary process in Nature ; and, as we saw, the circle with such diameter from top to bottom describes the ideal Church which is the whole Universe conceived as the Body of God.

So far, however, this is in terms of metaphysical theory, and there is a wide gulf between metaphysical theory and personal religious experience. If we take our diagram at the close of the last lecture as representing the *Cosmos*, we may construct another diagram of similar shape to represent that universe within which we call the *microcosmos*. Each individual soul is such a microcosm, and here too it is possible to find just such another dualism as was described above. Into this universe of the individual soul the Christ must come to make Himself the

centre, drawing down all fulness from God above, redeeming all that cries for redemption from beneath, so making a temple of the Holy Ghost which is in itself a world.

It is to make the transference from the metaphysical to the practical that the Apostle proceeds from the 24th verse of Chapter i, and continues to the 17th verse of Chapter iii. In other words he passes from the metaphysical to the field of pastoral theology, as the term is generally used in our theological colleges.

What a course in Pastoral Theology these next paragraphs provide !

It appears that the *proclamation* of the truth must be followed up by the *recommending* of the truth. The responsibility of the teacher extends not merely to his orthodoxy but also to his ability to be convincing. How may the Apostle so recommend his message, the message which he has just stated in so categorical and dogmatic a manner ? How is he to put it so that those who were in danger of being ' earthquake-shocked ' (μετακινούμενοι) may become ' firmly-founded ' (τεθεμελιωμένοι) and ' securely-built ' (ἐδραίοι) upon the hope which they have personally heard, which has been heralded

over the Roman world, and of which the Apostle has himself become the minister.

Here comes in, quite naturally and legitimately, S. Paul's recommendation of his message by the expression of the personal element. This next section all starts from the words, "*whereof I became a minister.*" I use the word 'legitimately' because, from the point of view of pastoral theology, much may be said as to the right and wrong use of the personal element in witness for Christ. Some fail by over-emphasis, some fail by lack of emphasis. There is a wrong use of one's own individuality which is blatant and offensive; there is also a right use of the same which is the sign of completest consecration. Where the end is Christ and not self, the minister must be something more than a voice; all personal qualities, gifts, and graces are intended to be part of the servant's self-oblation. So it is out of no spirit of self-advertisement that S. Paul declares to the Galatians, "Ye received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus," or asks of the Corinthians, "Are they ministers of Christ? I am more," or tells the Philippians of his longing after them "in the tender mercies of Jesus Christ." Rather, as their teacher, he is convinced that the passion of

the teacher for his converts ought to count in the argument he is presenting. The reference to himself, then, is not introduced idly, but is designed to direct the attention of the Colossians to the three claims the Apostle's ministry has established upon them. He will present himself as the *Sufferer*, as the *Servant*, and as the *Steward*. Let us note very briefly the implication of each one of these references.

1. He has a claim on his readers because of what he has *suffered*. He might have repeated the words of the Epistle to the Galatians : " I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." Using a Greek word not to be found elsewhere in the New Testament or in the Septuagint, he declares he is *filling up* those afflictions of Christ which it is his share to bear and that these sufferings are serviceable to the Church which is the Body of Christ.

2. He has a claim on them furthermore because of his *labours* on their behalf. Though he had not personally ministered at Colosse, yet his toil for all the Churches had been one long striving, one long test of strength (*ἀγωνίζομενος*). Had he been disposed he could have added yet further to the marvellous catalogue of labours he had written years before for the Corinthians (2 Cor. xi. 23 ff.).

Nor is there in the recital any vaunting of self-conceit, since all this apostolic toil is set forth as 'the energy of God' 'energising mightily' through him as merely the instrument of the divine working.

3. He has a third claim on them because of the *stewardship* which has been entrusted to him as a sacred deposit. The Apostle is debtor both to Greek and to barbarian because of what has been committed to him as a trust. This stewardship is a *mystery*, not in the old sense of being something which must be concealed, but in the Christian sense of something to be revealed to all mankind. It is something he would fain proclaim with all his might, a yearning to provoke the prayer:

"Give me a voice, a cry and a complaining,—
O let my sound be stormy in their ears!
Throat that would shout but cannot stay for straining,
Eyes that would weep but cannot wait for tears!"

The Apostle has now uncovered his own burning heart to his readers and has revealed to them the closeness of the tie which binds them and him together; it is now possible to proceed to what has been called his 'polemic,' but which surely deserves a better name. Let us speak of these verses, which form the rest of the second chapter, as the Apostle's

admonition. It is the duty of the Christian teacher not only to proclaim truth, and not only to recommend it, but also to admonish, by warning those who are in danger of error of the consequences. S. Paul feels that there is something of which he is entitled to complain. Since he was last in Asia specious representatives of views hostile to his teaching had made most plausible assault upon the integrity of the faith and upon the steadfastness of the Christian communities. Years before, something similar had taken place in Galatia, and, with characteristic fickleness, the Galatians had yielded to temptation, accepting a 'different gospel' which was not 'another Gospel.' In Colosse the situation has not developed to such a point. As Dr. Alex. McLaren puts it, the Apostle is as yet only called upon to stop a leak, not to pump out a water-logged ship. He can still rejoice in the consideration of the order (τάξις) of the Colossian Church and of its steadfastness (στερέωμα)—both military virtues which the Apostle's association with the Prætorian Guard had taught him to appreciate. Nevertheless, he feels the necessity of warning them, and ignoring, in his emotion, some mingling of metaphor—would have them '*walk*' in Christ, be '*rooted*' in Christ,

and be '*built up*' in Christ, in order that being stablished in the faith they may stand unshaken every shock temptation may impose.

The danger is obvious. In the case of the Galatians, misguided and unstable men were induced to look back to the works of the law as the means whereby they might vindicate their righteousness in the sight of God ; in the case of the Colossians, the temptation, as we have already pointed out, is not so much to the formalism which results from submission to legalism, as to a formalism which was inclined to seek spiritual perfection through the discipline of asceticism and the consequent subjugation of the flesh. In either case, S. Paul warns, it is a going backward, in the one instance back to a condition of servility, in the second to a conception of the universe from which Christ had died to save them. In other words, both errors involve the choice of the imperfect instead of the complete.

The Colossians, like many in our own day, sought, moreover, to disguise the essential incompleteness of their views by the employment of high-sounding terms, and, for the only time in all his writings, S. Paul introduces that much abused word '*philosophy*.' As first used by Pythagoras, this was

a very modest term, implying a love of wisdom which, nevertheless, disclaimed the title of wisdom itself. The '*philosophos*' was not ready to describe himself as '*sophos*.' But, as used by so many since, the implications of the word 'philosophy' have been anything but modest, and the particular 'philosophy' which was luring the Colossian Christians away from Christ is here exposed as grossly pretentious and inadequate. In relation to its source it is '*of men*,' and in relation to its intrinsic character it is '*of the world*,' while so far from ensuring liberty of mind and spirit it threatened to bring back the very slavery from which Christ had ransomed believers by His death. The strong word which is translated '*maketh spoil of you*' seems to imply that the Apostle had in mind just such a raid as the Gnostics believed Satan to have made into the realm of light. Or possibly, considering the Assyrian traditions of Tarsus, he was picturing to himself the long line of dejected captives who had in past ages suffered deportation at the cruel will of some Eastern tyrant. By baptism those to whom he wrote had been redeemed and translated into the Kingdom of the Son. Yet, lo, with their own consent the evil power had reclaimed them, and

the self-deluded prisoners were passing ignominiously back to accept the yoke anew. With their faces turned towards the obsolete they were submerging themselves in the twilight of the Old Testament dispensation and seeking for angel and other mediators as of old. The result was bondage, a bondage even more hopeless than the servitude to legalism which had been the bane of the Galatians.

Their error, moreover, both in its origin and in its consequences, had at once its *theological* and its *practical* side. Let us look at each of these a little more in detail.

1. The *theological* error consisted in substituting for the perfect mediatorship of Christ a whole series of figments created by the imagination of men. This is set forth particularly in *four pregnant participial phrases* which may be paraphrased as follows :

i. Worship of the angels, suggested by the fear of incurring the charge of presumption should one avail himself of the mediatorship of Christ, is a self-chosen (voluntary), and therefore false, humility. It is the sin of diffidence—the Diffidence which Bunyan used so fittingly as the name for Giant Despair's wife—in the face of the divine assurance of fulness.

The Bohemian legend describes it in the story of the peasant who, admitted into the presence of his god and offered choice among all the treasures of heaven, slunk away with an old, out-worn pair of bag-pipes which he judged no one else would want. The humility of the Christian is not inconsistent with that holy audacity (παρρησία) which is faith's due prerogative.

ii. As a consequence of an unworthy diffidence, there comes about the dwelling in figments of our own invention. They who refuse the inheritance which Christ has made their own invariably endeavour to find some lesser way of meeting their spirit's need. This is the essence of the error which has carried men away from time to time towards various forms of Mariolatry and Hagiolatry. The error is opposed, not because it is desired to diminish the honour lawfully due to the Virgin Mother or to the blessed Saints, but rather because, under the (in itself) harmless '*Ora pro nobis,*' may lie that choice of lesser mediatorship which conceals the fear, begotten by lack of faith, of taking Christ at His word. There seems expressed the doubt as to the complete validity of the Incarnation as a means of reconciling man to God.

iii. Next in order comes the inevitable pride in our own chosen limitation, the inflation with vanity and self-conceit which is a further affront to God. It is this obstinate maintenance of the segmentary truth which men substitute for the 'fulness' which makes the essence of what we call sectarianism. How much more easily men seem to cling with ill-founded assurance to their own self-selected fragment than to the great rock of the truth itself. This too is sin against the love of the Incarnation.

iv. Lastly, there is that which sums up the whole error, cause, and consequence alike—"not holding the Head." Let us note the use of the word 'holding' (κρατῶν) rather than 'having' (ἔχων), since the seizing upon and retaining hold of Christ in His proper relation to God and Man is the secret of all security.

2. Out of all this misconception of theology springs the *practical* error so strangely similar—though arising from an entirely different motive—to that of the Galatians. The *régime* of ordinances—"Handle not, taste not, touch not"—will always possess a certain attractiveness to men, particularly to reformers in a hurry. From the days of Confucius to the present such a *régime* has appealed to

many as the cure for all evil and the proper guarantee of all moral values. But, as the Apostle puts it, there is in this method no such regenerative power as will exhaust the lusts of the flesh and make life spiritually constructive. (Note the force of that word *πλησμονή*). The life of Christ, planted within, alone can give to both body and soul their proper freedom. Not, of course, that the 'law of Christ' is without its obligations, but that the compulsion to fulfil these obligations which develops as the 'fruit' of the indwelling Spirit must be essentially different in character from the compulsion of the law. The moral failure of legalism, moreover, is paralleled by the moral failure of asceticism. Acts of asceticism might be entirely unrelated to morals. Even demons, according to the old Indian mythology might win power over the gods by stupendous penances, and Ravana, standing for countless ages on his head between five fires, demon though he be, becomes one whom it is a sin, even for the hero Rama, to slay. So, as a multitude of instances might illustrate, the self-denial which springs from an un-Christian motive may be as futile a way of justification as 'good works.'

The Apostle, however, is not content with pointing

out the loss sustained by those who prefer the part for the whole, the imperfect rather than the perfect. As in the Epistle to the Galatians, he makes the master-stroke of his argument the holding up of the Cross of Christ and the re-affirmation of the significance of Christ's Death and Resurrection in their relation to the Incarnation. To return to the dispensation of the principalities and powers after experience of the dispensation of Christ is not merely to go back; it is altogether to prove renegade. It is to *repudiate* Christ. Christ has died to render null and void the very 'philosophy' whose blandishments were proving so attractive to an ill-balanced and ill-established faith. The matter has already been put very forcibly and dramatically by the Apostle in some earlier verses which are among the most striking of the Epistle. These include the reference to the '*cheirograph*,' or note of hand, in ii. 14, and that to the Roman '*triumph*' in ii. 15. A word or two as to these:

i. While the *cheirograph*, or bond, was outstanding against a man, the consequence was, of course, servitude. The law, under the Old Testament dispensation, was just such a bond, standing against us in the threefold character of standard,

accuser, and avenger. In order to cancel such a note by Roman law (so it has been said) it was usual to strike a nail through the document and tear it from top to bottom. This is exactly what Christ had done with the Old Testament law by dying. He had taken the indictment with Him upon the Cross and there by His completest obedience unto death He had discharged it in full for all mankind. He cancelled it with the nails which rent the sacred Body, and the torn fragments of the cancelled cheirograph were buried with the Saviour in the tomb. Nay, more, the very dynasty under which the document had been served on mankind has been subverted by the death of Christ. The dispensation of the law is over ; its writs no longer run.

ii. Thence the Apostle passes to the metaphor of the '*triumph*.' This fifteenth verse is one of the most striking in the Epistle and should be carefully studied. The rendering of the R.V. "having put off from Himself the principalities and powers," seems difficult to justify either as translation or as exegesis. The Latin Fathers favour the rendering : "Having put off from Himself (His Body) He made a spectacle of the principalities and powers (as His

captives)." This is favoured by the R.V. margin. But the better understanding of the passage seems to me that of the Greek Fathers who give the verse as follows: "*Having despoiled the principalities and powers* (i.e. having stripped them of their arms) *He made of them a public show.*" This obviously conveys the Apostle's meaning. As the Roman conqueror, after overcoming the foe, came to Rome laden with the spoils of his victim, in order to make a public spectacle of the trophies he had won, so Christ, after having once for all by His death subjugated the ancient 'world-rulers' (κοσμοκράτορες) who had so long, as angels or as emanations, received the homage of men, now in His Triumph uses the '*feretrum*' of the Cross to display before the eyes of men the trophies of His redeeming love. Once before the Apostle had used this metaphor of the Roman triumph, namely, in 2 Cor. ii. 14, where he thanks God that he himself had been led in triumph behind the chariot wheel of the conquering Christ. Now, having possibly in the meantime been witness of a triumph in the Imperial city, he finds it natural to conceive of Christ's victory and its consequences under the familiar and striking figure. All the armour of His rivals Christ has stripped away and,

lo, He rides forth to reign henceforth for all eternity, King of kings and Lord of lords.

It remains, for the rest of this chapter, to note what I spoke of as the transference of a metaphysical theory into terms of personal religion. What must be the practical results of a doctrine so all-inclusive, a doctrine which not only throws light infinitely backward upon the purpose of Creation, but also infinitely forward over the new era inaugurated by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ?

It is nothing less than the reproduction of the experience of Christ in the experience of the individual believer. The baptism of the Christian is, so the Apostle sets forth, the pledge and the earnest of the reproduction of that experience. As for the whole race the death and resurrection of Christ was the crossing of the dividing line which separates the new order from the old, so for the individual the sacrament of baptism is his translation out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the Son.

Baptism is both death and resurrection in one sacramental rite. It is indeed "a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness." It is the truth implied in all the primitive and pagan rites

of initiation of which Christian baptism is the consummation. Even the Australian novice, preparing for the advent of his god, Daramoulun, had to die in pantomime, in order that he might enter into life as a man. "Perhaps," says Dr. Estlin Carpenter, "he is buried in the fetish-house ; or he passes through the bath into his new condition ; or he is vivified by the sprinkling of blood. But he awakes to fresh life. He must be utterly forgetful of the old ; he must even sometimes feign ignorance of his parents' home and names." In the primitive sacrifice, too, which prepared the way for the all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ, there was this intimate association of death and life. For example, in the *açvamedha*, or great horse-sacrifice of India, the worshipper was placed in the still quivering body of the slain beast, in order that he might on the one hand expiate the offence for which death was the penalty and at the same time receive the vitality which was thus set free. In other sacrifices the same principle was illustrated by passing between the sundered parts of the sacrifice. In every case it prepared the way for that conception of baptism which makes the Christian at once the sharer in the merits of the all-atoning sacrifice

and also participant of the vitality of the Risen Saviour.

In other words, *Baptism has two implications* :

i. The implication of *dying* to the old order. This idea is furthermore represented as a washing from the pollution of past sin, and again as the putting off of the stained garb of sinful habit.

ii. The implication of *new life*. This is represented also as the quickening action of the water upon the soul or seed, and again as the putting on of the clothing of virtue, even of that "white linen which is the righteous acts of the saints." We pay much less attention than is its due to the use of water as a re-vivifying agency, whereas from primitive times, even when the Egyptian baptized his dead in the hope that the act would win a response similar to that which the pouring of water won from the flagging plant or the thirsty soil, the power of water to quicken was more prominent even than the power of water to cleanse.

The Apostle sets forth with remarkable practicality and power the fact that this double application of the doctrine of Christ must find its expression in two ways. First, in the sacrament of Baptism itself which is the beginning of Christian life and the pledge

of its development. Secondly, in that 'daily renewing' (*cf.* the Collect for Christmas Day) which is the constant extension of Christian baptism until the regeneration is complete. So life becomes a daily baptism, with a daily dying and a daily rising from the dead, a daily cleansing and a daily quickening, a daily putting off and a daily putting on.

This daily 'putting off' and 'putting on' are described in the two paragraphs iii. 5-11 and iii. 12-14. The putting off is a daily series of 'slayings' (*νεκρώσατε*). It is also a discarding of those garments which correspond to what the Apostle calls in the Epistle to the Galatians 'the works of the flesh.' These must be stripped off ere the believer can be admitted to the glad festival of the sons of God. Then comes the putting on. To the Ephesians S. Paul had written of putting on armour. Here he speaks of the ordinary clothing of Christian virtue, with love as the girdle (*σῆμασται*) which holds all together. In such a life of happy and beautiful freedom, the festal freedom of a new order, is to be realised that which shall break down every barrier of condition and race, which shall make possible every social reform, and which shall ensure the final victory of light over the powers of darkness.

The chapter opened with the claim that a Christocentric universe must be reproduced as a Christocentric microcosm in the individual life. The vindication of this claim is supplied in the *three concluding admonitions* which close the section, namely, in the 15th, 16th and 17th verses of Chapter iii.

i. Christ must be the *centripetal* force of personal religion. In the words of the 15th verse, the peace of Christ must be 'umpire' or arbitrator to pull all the contending forces of life together. To the Philippians S. Paul had written of the 'Peace of God' as the garrison power which was to keep life safe; here, using the term 'Peace of Christ' which some copyists found so unusual that they set it aside as impossible, he offers the Peace of Christ as reconciliation.

ii. Christ must also be the *centrifugal* force of life through which all the rich results of an indwelling Christ may flow forth to the whole circuit of experience. Every kind of wisdom must inevitably fill the life wherein Christ dwells. The seeker may tire himself out in the pursuit of philosophies which prove but flying goals, if not mirages. He may be forced to confess with the pessimist :

" Myself when young did eagerly frequent
Doctor and saint and heard great argument
About it and about, but evermore
Went out through the same door wherein I went."

But Jesus Christ, dwelling in the heart, gives a "wisdom the weary schoolmen never knew," and the believer is brought to his knees to confess with the saint: "Thou hast made us for Thyself and our heart is restless till it rest in Thee."

iii. Christ must also be the *centre* itself, providing from thence the one motive for whatsoever is accomplished in thought, in word, in deed. With any other centre all life goes necessarily awry; the Christ-centred life is for ever secure from every evil assault. What admonition could more comprehensively bring to a point all that the Apostle has hitherto sought to teach, and at the same time prepare so well for what is still to come as these concluding words: "Whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks 'o God the Father through Him'?"

CHAPTER V

THE APPLICATION

COL. iii. 17: "Whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."

CHAPTER V

MANY a reader of the Epistle to the Colossians has experienced a kind of bewildered surprise at the sudden descent of the Apostle from the high level of argument as hitherto maintained to the contents of the concluding section which commences at iii. 18. Even many of the commentators seem to have hastily assumed that, to all intents and purposes, the Apostle's message is now complete and that it only remains to add a few practical admonitions of a general character, thereupon to conclude with the necessary personal greetings. Is this conception of the Epistle correct? Has the apostolic fire died down upon the altar? Is S. Paul just feeling 'for the common chord again, sliding by semitones into the minor'? Has he descended from the sublime height of his disquisition on the dignity and supremacy of Christ to offer a few simple recommendations, in which some have even detected the spirit of a reactionary, respecting the duties of

husbands and wives, fathers and children, masters and slaves ?

To some it has seemed astonishing that the Apostle should have professed any concern whatever, at any time of his career, with such matters as these. Was not his life, they ask, far removed from all these ordinary domesticities ? Fitting it were for him to sing :

“ Yes, without cheer of sister or of daughter,
Yes, without stay of father or of son,
Lone on the land and homeless on the water,
Pass I in patience till the work be done.”

Yet, in either case, the surprise would be quite out of place. S. Paul was by nature exceedingly responsive to the appeal and obligation of human fellowship, and it is certain that he felt no strangeness whatsoever in the transition nor any gap in the sequences of his exposition. On the contrary it was a matter of vital importance for his readers to understand that the argument of the earlier sections of the Epistle leads inescapably to the recommendations which form the close. “ I have never,” says Professor George Woodberry, “ such firm conviction of the divine meaning that abides in our life as when I notice how the soul puts forth its flower in the

humblest lives and in the most neglected places, what deeds of the spirit are simply done by the poor and almost as if they did not know it." This is exactly what must spring from the doctrine of the Epistle. 'It is not for philosophers or for dilettanti that the Apostle writes; it is for men and women in every condition of life. The great object for which truth is made plain, and the errors which obscure truth denounced, is that truth may be set to work in the world for the redemption of human society. Now comes the test. If truth is to succeed anywhere, here is the arena for the battle. Will it serve? Both here and in the Epistle to the Ephesians, where the Apostle makes a similarly practical use of his Christological argument, the application is offered to ordinary men and women in "the trivial round, the common task," to husbands, wives, fathers, children, masters and slaves.

Let us note further the special need for so practical a termination of the argument in the particular circumstances under which S. Paul was writing.

1. It was one lamentable consequence of the ascetic turn which the Colossian speculation had taken that men were disposed to connect the rejection of the domestic ties with a higher degree of

spirituality. The very name 'religious' was beginning in certain directions to be limited to those who practised religion apart from the ordinary obligations of society. The Brahmins alone in India could be religious, because alone free to keep all the ritual requirements, while the unprivileged Çudra might be condemned to lose his tongue for reciting a Vedic text. The Pharisee, again, was privileged to be a keeper of the Law, while the common people, lacking leisure for the requisite scrupulosity, was 'accursed.' Simon Stylites, once again, might as a saint win the approval and plaudits of the crowd, while the little boy who trudged across the burning sands to bring food and water to the holy man was not technically religious at all.

2. A second consequence was from the opposite direction. Then, as now, there was prevalent the disposition on the part of those who followed esoteric teachings to become impatient with the restraints of commonplace domestic morality. In the early Church, in this very region of Phrygia, great scandal was caused by this contempt for the ordinary conventions in the matter of sex relations. Sometimes this contempt led to outbreaks of most disgraceful license. One has only to read the fourth

century story of Glycerius the Deacon, as given in Ramsay's "Church in the Roman Empire," to see how easily a fancied superiority to the common rule might end in disastrous moral collapse. It is not unfitting that the Apostle should show that the manifestation of the Pleroma is for the purpose of transfiguring the most humdrum aspects of human life. The lesson is one which is needed quite as much to-day as then, for there are still those who walk with heads high in air while their feet are clogged with miry clay.

3. There is a third reason for this rallying to the support of a Christian conception of the family at the close of the Epistle. The Apostle's residence at Rome must have opened his eyes to the social rottenness which was one of the main dangers threatening the stability of the Imperial system. The Roman satirists have made us familiar with the fact that marital unfaithfulness, filial impiety, and the widespread tolerance of slavery were the three moral cancers preying on the vitals of Roman society. Among the Prætorian Guard the Apostle must have had every opportunity of hearing of the unparalleled viciousness, in high quarters and in low, which constituted the open sore of the time.

In such society there was need to show the meaning of old-fashioned virtues in the light of the Incarnation. It was even better to appear as a reactionary Jew, pleading the religious sanction for social purity, than to pose as an advanced Roman of the type familiar to us from so much contemporary literature.

At this point, however, even from those in full general sympathy with what has been written above, there will arise the question as to why the apostolic injunctions suggest to so slight a degree any enthusiasm for the social reforms which human relations at this time so plainly demanded. Why is there, it is asked, so much acquiescence in social relations as they were, so little indication of a desire for those revolutionary changes which have nevertheless, we would fain believe, come to the world as a direct result of Christian teaching? It is, of course, certain that few modern reformers would have written precisely as S. Paul writes here, and it might seem that the Apostle stands condemned for a servile condonation of social injustices which have been generally reprobated in our modern civilisation.

The three examples of social injustice in the

Roman Empire which are most commonly adduced are just these :

- i. The inferior status of Womanhood.
- ii. The unmerciful subjugation of Childhood.
- iii. The general acceptance of Slavery.

Are we to suppose that S. Paul's doctrine of the Christ was compatible with the stereotyping of a social condition in which injustices of the rankest kind prevailed ? Is New Testament literature after all on the same level as the Qūran in which " the letter stands, without expanse or range, stiff as a dead man's hand " ? Was Christianity preached only to rivet more strongly the shackles of woman, child and slave ?

Surely not. There are two principles exemplified in the history of Christianity of which we must never for a single moment lose sight.

- i. We must be ready to acknowledge that the first condition of a genuine social reform is not in the revolutionary change of external symptoms through violence exerted from outside, but rather in the impartation of a new philosophy and power of life such as may make even the slave triumph over his slavery, and the down-trodden escape from the lordship of tyranny into the larger liberty of the

spirit. The slave Epictetus, who felt himself ' dear to the immortals,' even in bondage, had learned this. Believing as he did that God could dwell in the human body, he knew, with the poet, that

" Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage."

Revolution, as in Russia, may indeed turn things topsy-turvy and, to a limited extent, avenge the wrongs of an outraged proletariat, but it can never create the new day of equal justice, or even provide adequate compensation for all the cruelty and bloodshed which are involved. On this subject it is interesting to read certain conclusions of Mr. Bertrand Russell in his recent book, " Bolshevism : Practice and Theory."

ii. We study history to little or no purpose unless we recognise that, perhaps as unobserved as the dew which falls upon the parched herbage of the field, there has been descending upon human society, as the direct result of belief in the Incarnation, a new power of healing and of hope which, together with its emphasis upon the value of things unseen, has worked, and is working, redemption for the things which are seen. External conditions which

may be only reduced to ruinous heaps by revolution to provide unstable ground for the erection of other edifices of a kindred sort, may be transfigured and transformed by the light which is kindled within. Men who become transformed through the indwelling presence of Christ must inevitably transform the institutions they control and the society of which they form a part. No better illustration of this can be adduced than the one provided for us by S. Paul's dealings with slavery in the person of Onesimus, as reflected here and in the letter to Philemon. The institution of slavery had brought about such a stratification of society that in Rome one third of the population was the property of the rest. Tens of thousands of men were mere live chattels, subjected daily to unspeakable barbarities, and liable at any moment, at the whim of master or mistress, to suffer an ignominious and cruel death. Out of this iniquitous system there were just two paths, one of which ended finally in a *cul de sac* or something worse.

To many it has seemed that the one thing necessary was to upraise the banner of revolt and quench, if needful in blood, the tyranny of master over slave. It was at any moment a terrible possibility in

antiquity, yet even the humanitarian of the time who reflected might well hesitate before the menace of a servile war such as must certainly wreck the whole fabric of civilisation, such as it was, and at the same time could not assuredly provide even a *tabula rasa* for new experiment. The spectacle of Russia to-day only serves to confirm our view that along this road lay no way even to the lower type of freedom.

The other course is the method, to impatient human eyes so provokingly slow, whereby divine love works in the hearts of men. That sense of human brotherhood which sprang from the Creed of the Incarnation, made the slave the freeman of Christ and the master the Lord's bondman. It gave to all men, without distinction of condition, a common place at the altar ; it gave the glory of a common martyrdom ; it gave to the slave equally as to the freeman a place in the Church's ministry. In this way came gradually those ameliorations which the 'hurry-up' methods of men so commonly fail to achieve. Through the slow ferment of a doctrine which made all men 'kin to the highest and partner to the best' there came to pass those triumphs of the "Babe born lowly" Who should

" Date from that crib the dynasty of Love ;
 Strip his misused thunder-bolts from Jove ;
 Bend to their knee Rome's Cæsars, break the chain
 From the slave's neck ; set sick hearts free again,
 Bitterly bound by priests and scribes and scrolls,
 And heal with balm of pardon sinking souls ;
 Should Mercy to her vacant throne restore,
 Teach right to kings and patience to the poor :
 Should by His sweet Name all names overthrow,
 And by His lovely words the quick seeds sow
 Of golden equities and brotherhood,
 Of Pity, Peace, and gentle praise of Good ;
 Of knightly honour, holding life in trust
 For God, and Lord, and all things pure and just ;
 Lowly to woman ; for maid Mary's sake
 Lifting our sister from the dust to take
 In homes her equal place, the household queen,
 Crowned and august, who sport and thrall had been ;
 Of arts adorning life, of charities
 Gracious and wide, because the impartial skies
 Roof one race in ; and poor, weak, mean, distressed,
 Are children of one bounteous Mother's breast,
 One Father's care."

Who shall say that the Christian method of destroying evil at its source, while creating character, has not proved superior to the method of repression, by legalism or violence, of the external symptom ?

To the doctrinaire how simple and elementary seem these instructions of the great Apostle ! Wives are to submit themselves to their husbands ; husbands are to love their wives and not be irritable ; children

are to obey their parents, and, since 'fractus animus pestis juventutis,' parents are to avoid the over-severity which causes children to lose heart ; slaves are to work heartily as in the sight of God ; masters are to give to their slaves what in modern parlance is called 'the square deal,' remembering that they too have a Master in heaven. In a word, there are just two principles to be recognised : one, the sense of obligation or *duty* ; the other, the obligation of *love*. In the Christian life "All's Law, all's Love."

The instruction, I say, may seem limited, but how wonderful has been the result ! The approach to God in Christ is revealed and realised, not in ways remote from ordinary life, but in "the trivial round." It is in substance the story which Lowell tells of the prophet who, weary and footsore, journeyed to Mt. Sinai believing that, but for the one sacred spot, God had left the earth. Yet on this very spot God gave him as the sign of the divine presence the same tender little flower which he had refused when his daughter pressed it on him on the threshold of his home. Tagore teaches the same simple but much needed lesson in *The Gardener* : Standing by the bed, where wife and child lie peacefully

asleep, the would-be ascetic exclaims: 'This is the time to give up my home and seek for God.' Then God commanded: 'Stop, fool, leave not thy home'; but still he heard not. And God sighed and complained: "Why does my servant wander to seek Me, forsaking Me?"

Christ has indeed triumphed in many a life which faced and accepted the painful duty of renouncement. The lives of men like S. Francis d'Assisi and Savonarola are full of lessons for those to whom even human love may have its snares. But one may surely affirm that Christ has triumphed still more wonderfully in the lives of Christian saints who have filled the atmosphere of narrow domesticities with the light of heaven. Many of the great painters felt this when they dared to bring the Christ as a familiar visitor into the homes of men, with little attendant angels timidly at ease among the household pets. Personally, one of the best-loved of pictures is the Murillo in the Louvre entitled *The Kitchen of the Angels*. Here the celestial visitants appear to relieve the embarrassment of an aged saint upon whom unexpected company has descended, and one can never look without enjoyment upon the heavenly time the angels are having

in the kitchen among the pots and pans while they prepare the feast. We feel how true it must have been at that first miracle where Jesus manifested His glory, that "the servants which drew the water knew."

To know the practicability of such divine contact with the common stuff of life is to have at hand the ready cure for those three great problems of modern society, problems before which the Church seems sometimes to recoil in despair :

- i. The problem of divorce and sex relations.
- ii. The problem of filial disobedience and parental indifference.
- iii. The problem of industrial injustice, of sabotage and slacking.

For all these the one adequate remedy is provided in the practical application of the doctrine of the Incarnation. Christ, in the language of Bishop Stubbs, of Ely, "is the quickening impulse of all that is best in what we call modern civilisation, the nourisher of new graces in the ever-widening circles of the family, the society, the state, the inspirer of art and literature and morals and government, by lifting them all into a higher atmosphere of hopefulness than was ever possible until He came,

' the head over all things, to the Church, the Fulness of Him that filleth all in all.' "

From these general instructions it is natural to pass to the personal references which, in the light of what has been already said, will in no wise be considered as so many addenda. The great question as to whether Christ is indeed truly reigning in the world of men is answered affirmatively, not through high-sounding systems of philosophy but by just such tests as these references afford.

Take, for example, the first two of these, the salutations to Tychicus and Onesimus. In some imperfect manifestations of Christianity the underlings, or servants, of the saints have fared but ill. But here is Tychicus, a subordinate, a mere messenger or letter-carrier, who nevertheless is glorified with the humble service he is charged with performing for the furtherance of the Gospel. He has indeed learned by heart the clause which " makes drudgery divine." His whole career, though missing earthly fame, is immortalised because of the apparently trivial service done in the name of Christ. As a consequence we see him linked with the Apostle himself as " a beloved brother," " a faithful minister," " a fellow bond-slave." As one has put it, " the fleeting

✓ things which are done for Christ become eternal."

A still more striking case is that of Onesimus. A poor runaway slave, guilty, no doubt, of idleness, lying, thievery,—a mere profitless chattel, he has been rescued, through the practical application of a new theory of human nature, from the lowest degradation that human nature was capable of enduring. Lifted up out of the mire by the 'social science' of the doctrine of Incarnate Love, Onesimus, too, has risen to fellowship with the Apostle and is now 'a faithful and beloved brother.'

The remaining salutations have their similar significance. First, we are brought into touch with the three large-hearted Christian Jews, Aristarchus, Marcus (purged of his early failure), and Jesus, surnamed Justus. These have all been a comfort to the Apostle in his imprisonment. Then we have a further reference to the evangelist of Colosse, Epaphras, with a splendid tribute to his labours on behalf of his home town. Following this we have a curiously distinguished mention of the two Gentile associates. Luke is the 'beloved physician,' and it is an interesting comment on S. Paul's supposed indifference to the Gospel record to find that two out of the four Evangelists are at this time sharers

of the Roman imprisonment. The other Gentile is Demas, and it seems almost an anticipation of the subsequent defection to note that in his case no word, eulogistic or otherwise, is added to the formal greeting. Coming events are already casting their sad shadows before.

The final messages are in no wise out of harmony with the thought which has been emphasised. The brethren in Laodicæa are cordially remembered ; also Nymphas (possibly Nympha), and the Church which gathered at his (or her) house. Then follows an order, throwing considerable light on the way in which the Pauline Epistles obtained their circulation, that when the Epistle has been read to the Colossians it (or probably a copy) is to be sent on to the Church at Laodicæa. At the same time the Epistle sent to the Laodicæans is to be returned to Colosse. We have already alluded to the question as to whether this last-mentioned letter represents one known to us under another name (such as the Epistle to the Ephesians), or whether, through that lukewarmness with which the Laodicæans are charged in the Apocalypse, it was allowed to perish.

The last personal greeting is to Archippus, who, in all probability, was the ordained son of Philemon.

Are we to suppose, from the tender seriousness of the Apostle's message, that the young man's zeal has been in danger of flagging? It is hardly necessary. The old missionary, as in the later letter to Timothy, is gravely anxious that they to whom such '*fulness*' has been committed as a stewardship should not themselves fail in '*fulness*' of witness. "Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou *fulfil* it." Who, pondering on the significance of all that has gone before, can fail to be solemnised at the responsibility that ministry, received from the Incarnate Lord, imposes upon him? Must not every labourer for Christ consecrate himself with renewed ardour to fulfil the ministry which has been thus received?

The letter is completed; the Apostle takes the reed from the hands of the amanuensis to add, as was his custom, the final salutation. As the fetters clank together in falling upon the desk before him, he inscribes the last pathetic appeal, gathering up the whole witness of his career in the words: "Remember my bonds," and the whole purport of his message in the prayer: "Grace be with you!"

Grace! Yes, that is the sum and substance of the whole letter. It is the meaning of that divine

Love which reached down into Chaos from the highest heaven to touch the lowest. It is the divine germ which, through every obstacle, climbed up from the abyss to find the light of heaven. It is the strong link of eternal love which holds from God to Man and from Man to God. The Pleroma is, after all, not unreachable, and the material world is not irredeemable. Man in Christ is the potential master of both his worlds, undefiled by matter, undismayed by the height of that heaven wherein God dwells. Life is from henceforth thrilled through and through with the wondrous miracle that, as the completion of the existence of the Infinite is to be found in its touch with the Finite, so the destiny of Man is alone to be discerned in that Infinite to which the Christ lifts up his being.

“Thou shalt bear a blood-stained cross upon thy breast,
Thou shalt stand upon the common, human sod,
Thou shalt lift unswerving eyes unto thy God,
Thou shalt stretch torn, rugged hands to East and West
Thou shalt call to every throne and every cell,—
Thou shalt gather all the voices of the earth,
Thou shalt wring repose from weariness and dearth,
Thou shalt fathom the profundity of hell.
But thy height shall reach the height of God above,
And thy breadth shall span the breadth from pole to pole
And thy depth shall sound the depth of every soul,
And thy heart the deep Gethsemane of Love.”

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